

NOVELS AND TALES
COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. CCCCXXXVII.

NOVELS AND TALES.

VOL. VIII.

LEAPZIO
HARRIS AND T. G. SMITH
1858
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COLLECTION

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VOL. VIII.

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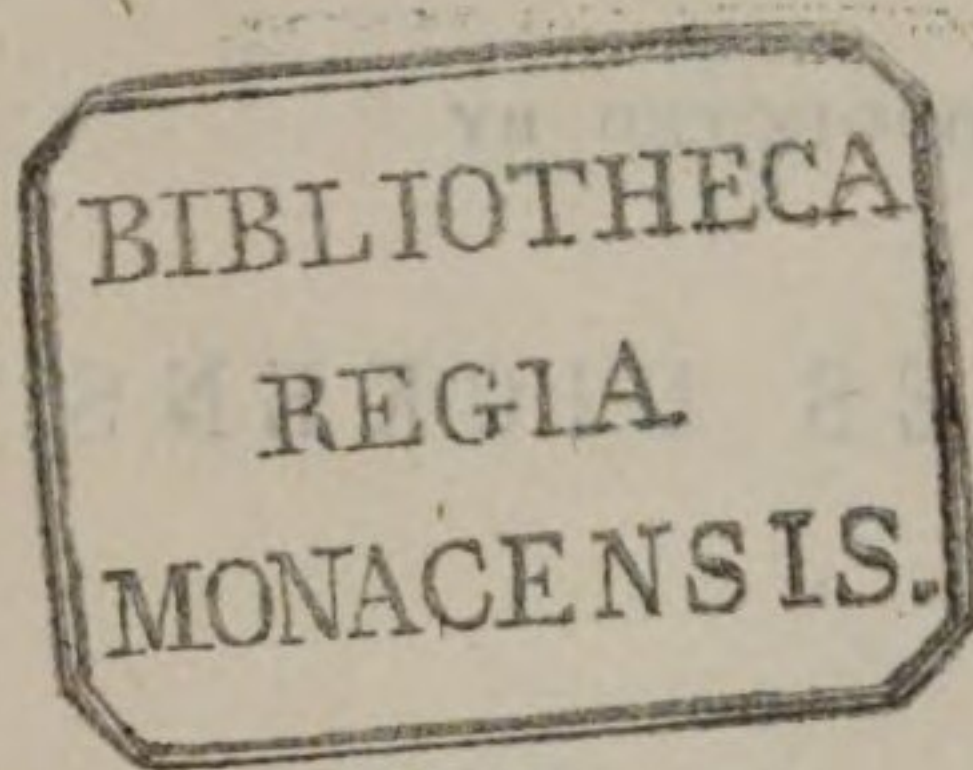
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NOVELS AND TALES

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NOVELS AND TALES.

VOL. VIII.

WELL-AUTHENTICATED RAPPINGS.

THE writer, who is about to record three spiritual experiences of his own in the present truthful article, deems it essential to state that, down to the time of his being favored therewith, he had not been a believer in rappings, or tippings. His vulgar notions of the spiritual world, represented its inhabitants as probably advanced, even beyond the intellectual supremacy of Peckham or New York; and it seemed to him, considering the large amount of ignorance, presumption, and folly with which this earth is blessed, so very unnecessary to call in immaterial Beings to gratify mankind with bad spelling and worse nonsense, that the presumption was strongly against those respected films taking the trouble to come here, for no better purpose than to make supererogatory idiots of themselves.

This was the writer's gross and fleshy state of mind at so late a period as the twenty-sixth of December last. On that memorable morning, at about two hours after daylight, — that is to say, at twenty minutes before ten by the writer's watch, which stood on a table at his bedside, and which can be seen at the publishing-office, and identified as a demi-chronometer made by BAUTTE of

Geneva, and numbered 67,709 — on that memorable morning, at about two hours after daylight, the writer, starting up in bed with his hand to his forehead, distinctly felt seventeen heavy throbs or beats in that region. They were accompanied by a feeling of pain in the locality, and by a general sensation not unlike that which is usually attendant on biliousness. Yielding to a sudden impulse, the writer asked:

“What is this?”

The answer immediately returned (in throbs or beats upon the forehead) was, “Yesterday.”

The writer then demanded, being as yet but imperfectly awake:

“What was yesterday?”

Answer: “Christmas Day.”

The writer, being now quite come to himself, inquired, “Who is the Medium in this case?”

Answer: “Clarkins.”

Question: “Mrs. Clarkins, or Mr. Clarkins?”

Answer: “Both.”

Question: “By Mr., do you mean Old Clarkins, or Young Clarkins?”

Answer: “Both.”

Now, the writer had dined with his friend Clarkins (who can be appealed to, at the State-Paper Office) on the previous day, and spirits had actually been discussed at that dinner, under various aspects. It was in the writer's remembrance, also, that both Clarkins Senior and Clarkins Junior had been very active in such discussion, and had rather pressed it on the company. Mrs. Clarkins too had joined in it with animation, and had observed, in a joyous if not an exuberant tone, that it was “only once a year.”

Convinced by these tokens that the rapping was of spiritual origin, the writer proceeded as follows:

"Who are you?"

The rapping on the forehead was resumed, but in a most incoherent manner. It was for some time impossible to make sense of it. After a pause, the writer (holding his head) repeated the inquiry in a solemn voice, accompanied with a groan:

"Who ARE you?"

Incoherent rappings were still the response.

The writer then asked, solemnly as before, and with another groan:

"What is your name?"

The reply was conveyed in a sound exactly resembling a loud hiccough. It afterwards appeared that this spiritual voice was distinctly heard by Alexander Pumpion, the writer's footboy (seventh son of Widow Pumpion, mangler), in an adjoining chamber.

Question: "Your name cannot be Hiccough? Hiccough is not a proper name?"

No answer being returned, the writer said: "I solemnly charge you, by our joint knowledge of Clarkins the Medium — of Clarkins Senior, Clarkins Junior, and Clarkins Mrs. — to reveal your name!"

The reply rapped out with extreme unwillingness, was, "Sloe-Juice, Logwood, Blackberry."

This appeared to the writer sufficiently like a parody on Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-Seed, in the Midsummer Night's Dream, to justify the retort:

"*That* is not your name?"

The rapping spirit admitted, "No."

"Then what do they generally call you?"

A pause.

"I ask you, what do they generally call you?"

The spirit, evidently under coercion, responded, in a most solemn manner, "Port!"

This awful communication caused the writer to lie prostrate, on the verge of insensibility, for a quarter of an hour: during which the rappings were continued with violence, and a host of spiritual appearances passed before his eyes, of a black hue, and greatly resembling tadpoles endowed with the power of occasionally spinning themselves out into musical notes as they swam down into space. After contemplating a vast Legion of these appearances, the writer demanded of the rapping spirit:

"How am I to present you to myself? What, upon the whole, is most like you?"

The terrific reply was, "Blacking."

As soon as the writer could command his emotion, which was now very great, he inquired:

"Had I better take something?"

Answer: "Yes."

Question: "Can I write for something?"

Answer: "Yes."

A pencil and a slip of paper which were on the table at the bedside immediately bounded into the writer's hand, and he found himself forced to write (in a curiously unsteady character and all down-hill, whereas his own writing is remarkably plain and straight) the following spiritual note.

"Mr. C. D. S. Pooney presents his compliments to Messrs. Bell and Company, Pharmaceutical chemists, Oxford Street, opposite to Portland Street, and begs them to have the goodness to send him by Bearer a fivegrain genuine blue pill and a genuine black draught of corresponding power."

But, before entrusting this document to Alexander Pumpion (who unfortunately lost it on his return, if he did not even lay himself open to the suspicion of having wilfully inserted it into one of the holes of a perambulating chesnut-roaster, to see how it would flare), the writer resolved to test the rapping spirit with one conclusive question. He therefore asked, in a slow and impressive voice:

“Will these remedies make my stomach ache?”

It is impossible to describe the prophetic confidence of the reply. “YES.” The assurance was fully borne out by the result, as the writer will long remember; and after this experience it were needless to observe that he could no longer doubt.

[The next communication of a deeply interesting character with which the writer was favored, occurred on one of the leading lines of railway. The circumstances under which the revelation was made to him — on the second day of January in the present year — were these: He had recovered from the effects of the previous remarkable visitation, and had again been partaking of the compliments of the season. The preceding day had been passed in hilarity. He was on his way to a celebrated town, a well-known commercial emporium where he had business to transact, and had lunched in a somewhat greater hurry than is usual on railways, in consequence of the train being behind time. His lunch had been very reluctantly administered to him by a young lady behind a counter. She had been much occupied at the time with the arrangement of her hair and dress, and her expressive countenance had denoted disdain. It will be seen that this young lady proved to be a powerful Medium.]

The writer had returned to the first-class carriage in which he chanced to be travelling alone, the train had resumed its motion, he had fallen into a doze, and the unimpeachable watch already mentioned recorded forty-five minutes to have elapsed since his interview with the Medium, when he was aroused by a very singular musical instrument. This instrument, he found to his admiration not unmixed with alarm, was performing in his inside. Its tones were of a low and rippling character, difficult to describe; but, if such a comparison may be admitted, resembling a melodious heart-burn. Be this as it may, they suggested that humble sensation to the writer.

Concurrently with his becoming aware of the phenomenon in question, the writer perceived that his attention was being solicited by a hurried succession of angry raps in the stomach, and a pressure on the chest. A sceptic no more, he immediately communed with the spirit. The dialogue was as follows:

Question: "Do I know your name?"

Answer: "*I* should think so!"

Question: "Does it begin with a P?"

Answer (second time): "*I* should think so!"

Question: "Have you two names, and does each begin with a P?"

Answer (third time): "*I* should think so!"

Question: "I charge you to lay aside this levity, and inform me what you are called."

The spirit, after reflecting for a few seconds, spelt out P. O. R. K. The musical instrument then performed a short and fragmentary strain. The spirit then recommenced, and spelt out the word "P. I. E."

Now, this precise article of pastry, this particular

viand or comestible, actually had formed — let the scoffer know — the staple of the writer's lunch, and actually had been handed to him by the young lady whom he now knew to be a powerful Medium! Highly gratified by the conviction thus forced upon his mind that the knowledge with which he conversed was not of this world, the writer pursued the dialogue.

Question: "They call you Pork Pie?"

Answer: "Yes."

Question (which the writer timidly put, after struggling with some natural reluctance), "Are you, in fact, Pork Pie?"

Answer: "Yes."

It were vain to attempt a description of the mental comfort and relief which the writer derived from this important answer. He proceeded:

Question: "Let us understand each other. A part of you is Pork, and a part of you is Pie?"

Answer: "Exactly so."

Question: "What is your Pie-part made of?"

Answer: "Lard." Then came a sorrowful strain from the musical instrument. Then the word "Dripping."

Question: "How am I to present you to my mind? What are you most like?"

Answer (very quickly): "Lead."

A sense of despondency overcame the writer at this point. When he had in some measure conquered it, he resumed:

Question: "Your other nature is a Porky nature. What has that nature been chiefly sustained upon?"

Answer (in a sprightly manner): "Pork, to be sure!"

Question: "Not so. Pork is not fed upon Pork?"

Answer: "Isn't it, though!"

A strange internal feeling, resembling a flight of pigeons, seized upon the writer. He then became illuminated in a surprising manner, and said:

"Do I understand you to hint that the human race, incautiously attacking the indigestible fortresses called by your name, and not having time to storm them, owing to the great solidity of their almost impregnable walls, are in the habit of leaving much of their contents in the hands of the Mediums, who with such pig nourish the pigs of future pies?"

Answer: "That's it!"

Question: "Then to paraphrase the words of our immortal bard —"

Answer (interrupting):

"The same pork in its time, makes many pies,
Its least being seven pasties."

The writer's emotion was profound. But, again desirous still further to try the Spirit, and to ascertain whether, in the poetic phraseology of the advanced seers of the United States, it hailed from one of the inner and more elevated circles, he tested its knowledge with the following

Question: "In the wild harmony of the musical instrument within me, of which I am again conscious, what other substances are there airs of, besides those you have mentioned?"

Answer: "Cape. Gamboge. Camomile. Treacle. Spirits of wine. Distilled Potatoes."

Question: "Nothing else?"

Answer: "Nothing worth mentioning."

Let the scorner tremble and do homage; let the feeble sceptic blush! The writer at his lunch had demanded of the powerful Medium, a glass of Sherry, and likewise

a small glass of Brandy. Who can doubt that the articles of commerce indicated by the Spirit were supplied to him from that source under those two names?

One other instance may suffice to prove that experiences of the foregoing nature are no longer to be questioned, and that it ought to be made capital to attempt to explain them away. It is an exquisite case of Tipping.

The writer's Destiny had appointed him to entertain a hopeless affection for Miss L. B., of Bungay, in the county of Suffolk. Miss L. B. had not, at the period of the occurrence of the Tipping, openly rejected the writer's offer of his hand and heart; but it has since seemed probable that she had been withheld from doing so, by filial fear of her father, Mr. B., who was favourable to the writer's pretensions. Now, mark the Tipping. A young man, obnoxious to all well-constituted minds (since married to Miss L. B.), was visiting at the house. Young B., was also home from school. The writer was present. The family party were assembled about a round table. It was the spiritual time of twilight in the month of July. Objects could not be discerned with any degree of distinctness. Suddenly, Mr. B. whose senses had been lulled to repose, infused terror into all our breasts, by uttering a passionate roar or ejaculation. His words (his education was neglected in his youth) were exactly these: "Damme, here's somebody a shoving of a letter into my hand, under my own mahogany!" Consternation seized the assembled group. Mrs. B. augmented the prevalent dismay by declaring that somebody had been softly treading on her toes, at intervals, for half-an-hour. Greater consternation seized the assembled group. Mr. B. called for lights. Now, mark the Tipping. Young B. cried (I quote

his expressions accurately), "It's the spirits, father! They've been at it with me this last fortnight." Mr. B. demanded with irascibility, "What do you mean, sir? What have they been at?" Young B. replied, "Wanting to make a regular Post-office of me, father. They're always handing impalpable letters to me, father. A letter must have come creeping round to you by mistake. I must be a Medium, father. O here's a go!" cried young B. "If I an't a jolly Medium!" The boy now became violently convulsed, spluttering exceedingly, and jerking out his legs and arms in a manner calculated to cause me (and which did cause me) serious inconvenience; for, I was supporting his respected mother within range of his boots, and he conducted himself like a telegraph before the invention of the electric one. All this time Mr. B. was looking about under the table for the letter, while the obnoxious young man, since married to Miss L. B., protected that young lady in an obnoxious manner. "O here's a go!" Young B. continued to cry without intermission, "If I an't a jolly Medium, father! Here's a go! There'll be a Tipping presently, father. Look out for the table!" Now mark the Tipping. The table tipped so violently as to strike Mr. B. a good half-dozen times on his bald head while he was looking under it; which caused Mr. B. to come out with great agility, and rub it with much tenderness (I refer to his head), and to imprecate it with much violence (I refer to the table). I observed that the tipping of the table was uniformly in the direction of the magnetic current; that is to say, from south to north, or from young B. to Mr. B. I should have made some further observations on this deeply interesting point, but that the table suddenly revolved, and tipped over on myself, bearing me to the ground

with a force increased by the momentum imparted to it by young B., who came over with it in a state of mental exaltation, and could not be displaced for some time. In the interval, I was aware of being crushed by his weight and the table's, and also of his constantly calling out to his sister and the obnoxious young man, that he foresaw there would be another Tipping presently.

None such, however, took place. He recovered after taking a short walk with them in the dark, and no worse effects of the very beautiful experience with which we had been favoured, were perceptible in him during the rest of the evening, than a slight tendency to hysterical laughter, and a noticeable attraction (I might almost term it fascination) of his left hand, in the direction of his heart or waistcoat-pocket.

Was this, or was it not a case of Tipping? Will the sceptic and the scoffer reply?

"A GUDE CONCEIT O'OURSELS."

ON my twenty-second birthday, just five months ago, I gained the object of my highest ambition — the medal of the Academy of Arts of my native town — and on the same day sold a small landscape (with figures) for thirty guineas. I got thirty one-pound notes, and wrapt a shilling in each of them. Now, I said, I am too big for my native town, and the streets are too narrow. Fame has not room to distend her cheeks enough to blow the proper note. I will start to-morrow for London. There, what glories await me; orders from Lords, and commissions from my honoured Sovereign and my adored Prince Consort; invitations to Waldemar Castle and Montresorville Hall all the summer; journeys to the Bank every quarter in my own neat little brougham to invest in the three per cents. I will run no risk by loans or mortgages. And Miss Arabel, see if she will toss her head so high, and stalk away past me as if I were one of her father's clerks! I rather think she will see she has not shown much sense since I met her before the Exhibition opened.

These thoughts passed rapidly through my mind as I was packing my portmanteau. My mother offered to help me in this operation; but success had altered my sentiments with regard to that antiquated relation so entirely, that I could not admit her to the privilege of

touching my clothes. The stockings of the gold medallist had become sacred; the other habiliments of the painter of "Kippel Wood with figures, price thirty guineas," disdained a lower handling than his own, as I locked the portmanteau, put on the direction, and said, "Mother, I am going to toon by the morning train." My mother is Scotch, I am Scotch, and our pronounciation is of the Scotch Scotchest.

"Till the toon?" said the old lady; "what for do you need a train to gang till the toon?"

The provincial person did not know that Toon meant London. I snubbed her in a sharp yet dignified manner, as Michael Angelo might have snubbed his mother if she had been ignorant of something about Rome; and the conversation ended by the amazed old individual bursting into tears, and saying: "Oh, Jamie, if this is the way ye treat yer mither because yer gotten a bit round thing to hing round yer neck, I wish ye had never got the prize!"

Astonishing! She had never parted from me before without kissing me and saying: "Ah! Jamie, y'ere no very bonnie, but y'ere gude, and that's far better." My heart softened in a moment, I would have called her back and kissed her a hundred times, and told her I loved her better than ever; but she was gone. She had hurried into my aunt's, three doors down the lane; and there, family lamentation was held over my sad and unnatural disposition, and many wishes expressed that the prize might turn out to be a mistake, and to have been intended for somebody else. As if anybody else could paint anything worthy of a prize! Ha! ha! I laughed at the idea when it was reported to me at tea, and hugged the purse containing the thirty guineas with

closer pertinacity to my breast. The proof of the painting is the price of it, I said, while my aunt sat and gloomed, and my mother looked at me with tears in her eyes. "He's sae changed, Ellen," she said to her scowling sister, "ye wad na ken him for the same laud" (this is the hideous way in which the northern barbarity pronounces "lad"), "he was aye a wee silly wi' his fraits and fancies, either in love wi' ither folk or thinking ither folk in love wi' him, but modest, and simple, and the kindest bairn to his auld mither; and only look at him noo!"

"Deed he's no very pleasant to look at any time," replied Auntie Nell; "for his squint's distressing, and the up-turn o' his nose is far frae engaging, and just at present I decline to look at him ava', for he puffs like a Hieland piper, and growls like a colley dog."

The infatuated pair carried on a conversation on the subject of my character, my personal appearance, my chances of success in the great world, the change come over me since the distribution, all as if I had been an article of furniture; or even with less delicacy, for I should be ashamed to speak so disparagingly (in its presence) of a chest of drawers as they spoke of me.

However, I heeded them not. I went full sail up the river of imagination, and saw myself president of the Royal Academy; proposing the prince's health at the annual dinner, sworn in of the right honourable privy council, and taking my seat at the board accordingly. How long they carried on their libellous discourse: how long I indulged in an agreeable prospect for the future I cannot tell; but at last my mother startled me in the middle of a walk with Lady Edith Maltravers, when I was in the very act of lifting her over a stile. I remember her long light hair got loose, and fell all over

my face as I raised her in my arms; my mother interrupted me, I say, while I was whispering some nonsense or other in Lady Edith's ear, by screaming: "Are ye as ungrateful to ither folk as to me? Are ye no goin to say fareweel till the President?"

The thought fell upon my heart like "light from the left," and I put my Glengarry bonnet on my head, and walked to the President's house. The President is a little stout man who married a printseller's daughter, and had all his finest pictures engraved by the cleverest artists. His uncle also was provost of the town, and his aunt was wife of the editor of the "Weekly Connoisseur." His genius therefore was universally acknowledged, and Sir Erskine Dawbie threw a new glory upon Scottish Art. He received me kindly. "What I have admired about you, Jamie," he said, "is your great modesty, and your beautiful affection to your mother. Try to overcome your bashfulness. It never did anybody any good. Continue to be kind to the auld woman, and I've no doubt you'll get on." My modesty! and I was conscious of what a striking peacock I had become. My affection to my mother! and the poor old body was weeping over my harshness. I felt as if the President had stung me. The wasp went on; "you have some drawbacks, Jamie, to contend against. You're very awkward in manner, and sometimes rather repulsive in look. You are uncommon little, and no very weel made. Your tongue seems a wee ow'r big for your mouth, and your accent — you'll forgive me for saying so — is perfectly atrocious. Some of these faults you canne correct, but others ye can — particularly the language; and I hope one of your first endeavours, when ye get to London, will be to learn the English tongue."

"But the brush has no accent," I said, proudly, with my eye fixed on an imaginary picture on the wall of the Royal Academy.

"Deed has it," replied the President; "so you must nae paint Lincoln, or Devon, or any of the counties, but only Grosvenor Square and Park Lane, like Sir Thomas. But in fack ye need ne mind what ye heint, if ye can speak or get folk to speak for ye: for fortunes are made in London mair by the tongue than the paint-pot. Therefore I say again, learn to converse in a Christian-like voice, and no to screech like a reupen owl."

I have a particularly delicate ear, and the President's pronounciation fell on me like the death-cries of a thousand pigs; but I was conscious at the same time that my own was as bad — nay, worse; for the tone was sharper, and the words were more indistinct. And yet, with a perception of this, with a taste for music which would have made me a Paganini, I could not alter a note or a syllable. A house continued to be a "hooss," in spite of all I could do; and the cattle in my landscape were all "coos." Strange that I, who had painted the Kippel Wood, could not avoid calling it the Keeple Wud! While the President spoke, I could have killed him for his insulting unkindness; but on my way home I determined to profit by what he had said. I determined to banish all Scotticism from words and grammar; and, as I stalked past my two relations, who were still in deep sorrow at my behaviour, I made the first use of my undefiled English by telling my aunt I despised her "hantiquated hidears," and my mother that she was a "habsurd old ooman."

I went up the creaky old stairs to make preparations for my departure. A thought struck me just before I

left my bed-room that old women must live, whether they were absurd or not, and that hantiquated hidears required support, where-upon I took out my breastful of notes, and left half of them on the table. I then walked majestically through the kitchen, and then the old ladies left off their crying for a moment, and my mother said: "Are ye no goin to say fareweel to yer auld mither?" I was on the point of breaking down. I was just in fact going to kiss her when she unluckily called me by my name. It is a hideous name, and all my indignation was roused. I said, "What demon tempted you to call me that? and above all, what made you marry a man who was marked for infamy by the patronymic of M'Craw? Is Sir Jemmy M'Craw a possible name for the President of the R. A — ? Mother! mother! you have been the ruin of your son!"

I rushed forth into the night with my portmanteau on my back, and my other properties under my arm. Passing up Glenlivet-street, I looked up to the windows of number nine. There was a party going on. I heard the piano, and fancied for a moment how nice Miss Arabella M'Clarty looked while she scattered her soft touches upon the chords like a shower of rosebuds. The tune was "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad." As I dare say, M'Clavers, the advocate from Edinburgh, was there, glancing at her with his toddy-oozing eyes; and young Scoogle, the surgeon, inspecting her clavicle and sternum with professional admiration; and here was I, outside, loaded with luggage, solitary, unknown, gazing up to the first-floor window; for the ground-floor was occupied by the office of "Mr. Simon M'Clarty, Writer." Ha! ha! play on! I shrieked (inaudibly, as people do in books). The time will come when perhaps I may whistle, and

perhaps I mayn't; but if I do, you, Miss Arabella M'Clarty, with your fine airs and graces, will come to me at the first note; but, after all, what are you to Lady Edith Maltravers? Go on, and tempt the whistle of M'Clavers, the advocate, or young Scoogle, the surgeon. You snobs! I despise you all! With which magnanimous declaration I took my place for Edinburgh; and, in due time continued my journey by the morning mail-train to London.

The mail-train to London I said, and in all safety and punctuality it reached its destination, but London I never attained. No; though my ticket was paid for the whole way, London I have never seen. Regent Street, the National Gallery, are all to me still undiscovered lands. A great change took place in my mind and fortunes, and this is how it occurred:

I got to Berwick in a pleasant day-dream all the time, only interrupted by the attempted conversation of some brutes in human form who would not leave me to myself. One ruffian, a guano-thoughted savage, who had come down from Doncaster to the Agricultural Show, seeing my easel and other properties stowed away beneath my seat, had the insolence to mistake me for a wandering musician, and asked me to favour the company wi' a play on the poipes. Another scoundrel thought the parcel contained a thimble-rig board, and asked to let him have a touch for the pea. I didn't like to reply; for my hideous Scottish accent glared me in the face the farther I receded from my native land, and I felt certain my indignant responses would have been received with laughter. I could have given my life to be gifted for five minutes with a true English pronunciation, that I might have said, "Vulgar wretches, I look down on

you with contempt. A gentleman holds no controversy with such disgusting snobs!" But too well I knew, if I had ventured to give utterance to these lofty words, the form they would have taken:—"Vulgar ratches! I luck doon on ye wi' contem. A gentleman does na' have any controversy wi' sich disgustin' snoabs!" I was therefore silent, because my tongue could not obey the dictates of my mind. The fear of my own pronunciation grew upon me with every mile; and, when I reached Paulborough, at which we were allowed a pause of twenty minutes for refreshment, I could not bring myself to ask for bread and butter, from the appalling consciousness that I should have demanded "brid and butther." I stood voiceless at the counter, tired with the journey, and nearly famished; when there appeared at the other side of the range of glasses and plates and bottles and tarts, a woman — no, a lady — no, an angel. Such a face I never saw — such a figure never moved in the dreams of Titian. Young, tall, light-haired, slim-waisted, blue-eyed, sweet-voiced, — dark gown, silk apron, gold necklace, lace jacket. Oh, how my heart went beating, beating; and she leaned across a salver covered with pork pies, and said, "Will you have anything to eat, sir?" If all the gold in the Bank; if all the pearls in the sea; if all the diamonds in Golconda had been offered me to make an answer, I could not have done it. I stood open-mouthed, open-eyed, open-handed, feet wide apart, hat on the back of my head, and gazed at the celestial vision. What an arm! what shoulders! what a shape! what a chin! what lips! — and I never said a word. "A foreigner, I suppose," she said, with a smile, "poor fellow! I wonder where his organ and white mice are!"

I felt blinded by the sight of so much loveliness. I

staggered rather than walked to the carriage I had come in. I took out my things, my trunk, and all my professional baggage, and laid them with a great thud on the platform. "Here I stay till I've spoken to that woman — till I've told her I adore her, — till I've painted her portrait, — till I've married her. I'll take her down with me to the north. We will settle ourselves in a charming cottage on the Tay, within the shadow of the Kippel Wood. I will paint all the morning with Adelisa (I wonder what her name is?) sitting beside me, or reposing on a sofa as my model for 'Tired Huntress returning from the Chace.' We will walk in the green lanes: we will fish in the flowing stream: we will read in the same book." "Get out o' that will ye," said the policeman, rudely pushing me from the edge of the platform. "The passengers are taking their seats. Train's off, gentlemen. Now, sir, where do you wish to go?"

How could I tell the vulgar person where I wished to go? I had no wish to go anywhere. I knew nobody in Paulborough, nor the name of a street, nor the sign of a hotel. I gazed in at the open door of the first class refreshment-room long after the train had disappeared; and, still busy among the salvers, corking bottles, rinsing out glasses, re-arranging plates of sandwiches was Adelisa. Ah, how beautiful she was as she coquettishly looked in the glass on the wall behind her, and tossed a stray ringlet into its proper place, or smoothed down her little apron, or smiled to the inferior maidens, or to the red-faced mistress of the place, who sat at a window in an inner chamber — or to the stout old waiter, or the burly porter; smiles, smiles for all — but not a smile for me! or to the policeman, or to the steady old railway clerk — or, — or — He! perish the sight! crack eyes! break

heart! a young man, tall and handsome, comes in from the street door, slips quietly behind the counter, takes her round the waist, chucks her under the chin, and says, "Veal and ham, Sukey, and a glass of cherry bounce."

"Now, sir, do you wish to go anywhere?" said the policeman.

"No," I said in a feeble voice; "I have no wish to go anywhere."

"Well, you mustn't stand here all day," said the man. "Down-train here in forty minutes; Sam, clear away the gentleman's luggage."

Had she knocked him down? Had she drawn herself up like Minerva helmet-headed, spear in hand? Had she cindered him into silence with a glance of preternatural fire? The brute was cutting his veal and ham, and putting little bits of it with his fork into her mouth, and sipping cherry-brandy, and making her sip it too — sip for sip. And I hadn't even asked her to give me a mutton pie, or a piece of bread and butter, or a glass of soda-water for fear of offending her delicate ear with my hyperborean brogue! Why wasn't I born in Suffolk, or Devon, or Yorkshire; where if the language is peculiar, it is still English, and this charming English woman would have recognised me for a countryman, and never have mocked me for my provincial tones.

"Where to sir?" said the porter, who had put all my worldly goods upon a truck.

"Wherever you like," I said, "the nearest change hoose." I knew twenty names for the sort of place I meant; but nothing would make its appearance on my disgusted lips but the basest of Scotch appellations.

"Where, sir?" inquired the ignorant fool.

"Pottus, ouse of hentertainment for man and beast! hinn! 'otel! public!" I cried in a fury of cockney pronunciation.

"Wery good, sir," said the man, "you'll find hexcellent hale at the Fisherman; also skittles."

One glance I cast into the refreshment-room. She was alone — will I speak? will I take her hand? will I tell her all I feel? I couldn't. I felt assured of not being able to utter a syllable if I once got within the glamour of her look. So I followed the porter with a sigh off the platform, through the office across the street, and behold me in the coffee-room of the Fisherman.

"Brandy-and-water!" I said as I threw myself on a chair. "I will gather courage from the bottle to tell her my love. In forty minutes the Down-train will arrive, and I shall see her again. Make haste, waiter — and let it be strong." My seat commanded a view of the entrance of the station. Puffing out of it with a cigar in his mouth, and his hat on one side of his head, there came forth the insolent gent, who had shared his luncheon with — (brutal miscreant, why did he mention her name?) Sukey. To me she was Susan, Susannah, every form of the name but that; and, as I gazed on him, I hated him — hated him for his matchless impudence — his six feet height — his audacious countenance and manly face and beard. "Who is that?" I asked the waiter, when he brought me the tumbler.

"That, sir; that's young Glinders, son of Glinders and Co. the brewers."

"And waiter!" I said in a careless voice, "who is Sukey at the bar? the young lady in the lovely dress —

the loveliest creeture in England — small waist, fine shoulders, white hands — din ye ken her?"

"They say young Glinders is going to marry Miss Oggit, which her mother keeps the refreshment-room — praps it's her, sir."

Death! she shall be rescued from the hands of Glinders. I will show her my landscape — waiter, more drink! — quick! I will ask her to come out for a walk after the Down-train goes. If once I get her to listen — to understand — aye — but how is that to be done? Don't my frightful Scotch frighten her to death? Will she comprehend what I mean?

* * * * *

We walked in the cool of the evening. The sun still lay in golden touches on the tops of wood and spire — the path led gradually away from the town, and followed the windings of a burn. There were foot-stiles at every field; at every stile I helped her over. I held her hand as she placed her beautiful foot on the top-rail and leapt down to where I stood. Once when to support her better I placed her hand upon my shoulder, Glinders suddenly came up the hedge-row. He gloomed and glowered — with my disengaged hand I struck him, and felled him to the earth — such a blow as Wallace may have bestowed on an English tyrant; as Cuthullin leaping from his cloud-borne car may have administered to Connal of the azure locks. Cold lay Glinders in his woe, grief seized his heart. "Fallen art thou, son of the brewer, and compassion fills my soul. Rise, captive of my spear, and leave my Susan to the voice of my praise —"

* * * * *

"Waiter, if ye dinna bring me mair drink in one

moment o' time, I'll brain ye on the wa' — the train will be down in ten minutes."

* * * * *

She blushed a beautiful consent. "Thus ever," I cried, "is sincerity rewarded." I took her home my beautiful, my bride. My mother bent over her — my aunt cried with rapture. I took her forth and said, "come into the garden, Sue," and we listened together to the dry-tongued laurels, pattering talk. 'This is my home, I said, we can easily add a painting-room at the west. Here I will work all day. Fame, money, friends, will all pour in; and you, seated like a goddess on an emerald throne, shall receive the homage of my heart — "Waiter, there's the whistle o' the Down-train. Mair drink, or ye're a deed man."

I swallowed the brandy and water. I hurried across the street. The London passengers were already in the room. I joined them — a fat man held forth his dirty hand and seized a mutton-pie. She said sixpence, he threw it down again, and said it was an extortion, he never paid more than a fourpenny piece. I stood and looked at her. Our eyes met. She smiled — the quarrel was arranged, I know not how, I only saw her lips curling with divine compassion towards the savage, and I believed, a softer compassion towards myself. When they were all gone, when the room was again empty — I suddenly felt an impulse of ungovernable admiration. I stretched across the counter and seized her hand; I was forcing it to my lips, but upset a large cruet of cherry-brandy and a vast pyramid of tarts. She screamed and struggled. I held her taper fingers, "I canna live withoot ye," I cried. "Come and marry me this moment, or I'll dee on the floor. I'll see ye to the next Exhibi-

tion. Ye sall be Venus in a shell, or Cleopatra with the asp, or Joan of Arc with the sword; and as to Glinders, I'll murder the haill firm!"

* * * * *

The mayor of Paulborough, is the most disgusting looking fellow, I ever saw. He sat frowning and puffing on his chair-of-state, and fined me large sums by way of damage for the breakages, and five shillings for being disorderly, and incapable of taking care of myself.

Next night at a late hour, I tapped at my mother's window. She thought I was a ghost, and went through half the shorter catechism, before I could persuade her I was come back. "Mither," I said, as I swallowed some bread and cheese before going to bed. "I'm no going to leave ye any mair. The English dinna understand us ava.' Were o'er modest and bashfu' — and that's the reason we never get on either wi' men or women — but yet modesty's a real merit in learning, and tawlent, and genius, and poetry, and painting, and metapheesics."

THE APPARITION OF MONSIEUR BODRY.

I.

EXACTLY one hundred years ago, there lived in Paris, in the Rue Saint Martin, a rich silk-merchant named Gombert. He was about sixty years of age, a widower, with an only child, a beautiful girl of nineteen, who was no less admired for her personal attractions than for the handsome fortune which she was likely one day to inherit. Madeleine Gombert was, indeed, the great match of the quarter in which the silk-merchant dwelt, and if she did not marry it was not certainly for want of suitors. A hundred years ago the reign of the Encyclopedists had begun, their doctrines had penetrated far and wide, and religion was going out of fashion; but a stranger accidentally dropping into the church of Saint Merri, on a Sunday morning, would have concluded, from the number of young men who knelt at mass and sat out the sermon, that devotion had — at all events — lost no ground in that quarter of the city. He would, however, have been wrong; the cause of this crowd of devotees arising simply from the fact, that Saint Merri was the parish church of Monsieur Gombert and his daughter, and that to see and, possibly, attract the notice of the beautiful Madeleine, had a great deal more to do

with their attendance than the sincerity of their faith, or their admiration for the preacher. Whether Madeleine Gombert were aware, or not, of the sensation which her presence excited I will not pretend to say: the chances are, that feminine instinct set her right on this point, though it did not influence her conduct. As for Monsieur Gombert, he was as far as possible from putting a right construction on this peculiar demonstration: to doubt was not his habit. He accepted everything literally, and believed religiously in all he saw.

Of course, it was never intended by nature or custom, by Madeleine Gombert or her father, that the possessor of so much beauty and the heiress of so much wealth should go to the grave unwed. Her marriage had, in fact, been a thing decided on, after the usual French mode of that time, — where there was anything to marry for, — while she was yet a child. The business of the silk-merchant of the Rue Saint Martin had thrown him in very close relations with a rich manufacturer of the city of Lyons, of the name of Bodry. As the connection increased, the desire arose on each side to cement it by the union of the two families. Monsieur Bodry had an only son, Monsieur Gombert an only daughter. Could anything be more natural than a compact between two capitalists, the terms of which should be, that Monsieur Bodry's son should marry Monsieur Gombert's daughter?

Although the proposed marriage of Henri Bodry and Madeleine Gombert was an arrangement of ten years' standing between their parents, which needed no consent on the part of the contracting parties, still, with the view of making them acquainted, Monsieur Bodry one fine morning consented to the request of his son, that he might go to Paris to see his betrothed, a few months be-

fore he came of age; on which occasion the nuptials were to take place. The young man felt, without doubt, a certain degree of curiosity respecting the person who was destined to be his partner for life; but — if the truth must be told, — he was, though of feeble constitution and uncertain health, extremely fond of pleasure. Then, as now, Paris was the focus of enjoyment, and to have his full swing of the capital before he settled down for good was the thing of all others which the young Lyonnese most ardently desired. Supplied then, with a full purse and the letter of introduction to Monsieur Gombert, which constituted his sole credentials, Henri Bodry set out from his native city, about the latter end of November, in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-seven.

A hundred years ago, the journey from Lyons to Paris was an affair of time. Ordinary travellers usually went by roulage, and consumed nearly twenty days on the road; but the wealthier middle classed aspired to the coche, a lumbering carriage without springs, nearly as heavy and almost as slow as the public wagon, but infinitely more genteel. As the roulier did not comport with the dignity of Henry Bodry, he took the coche. In those days of rare intercourse between places separated by any great distance, it seldom happened that the traveller, who was going all the way, met with a companion similarly intentioned. For the most part, people descended at intermediate towns, where others supplied their place; but it not infrequently chanced that a dreary blank with no new faces intervened, creating that worst of all sensations a Frenchman can experience, the intolerable ennui of having nobody to talk to.

Henry Bodry's prospect at starting was of the latter

cheerless character; for, after passing Trevoux, he found himself the sole occupant of the coche, and this irksome solitude lasted until he reached the ancient city of Mâcon. The coche, as soon as it was dark, put up for the night at the auberge called The Cross of Burgundy, and in a large room, containing four beds, the usual complement at that time, Henri was left to sup and sleep, and make it out how he might until eight o'clock on the following morning, when the vehicle would be once more in motion.

With a long November evening before him, the prospect was not a pleasant one; but, while he was waiting for his promised supper, a stranger entered the apartment, dressed as if for a journey, and carrying a small valise in his hand. He was a young man, apparently about the same age as Bodry, good-looking, and of a cheerful, pleasant countenance. After bestowing a glance on the occupant of the chamber, the stranger looked about him, as if to see which bed was unoccupied, and then took possession of one of them by throwing his cloak, hat, and valise upon it. This act of appropriation performed, he approached the table where Bodry sat, and, without any preamble, asked him if he was travelling, and which way he was going. With the frankness of his age, Henri at once told him his destination, at which the new-comer expressed great satisfaction, he being also bound for Paris, and, as freely as he had inquired, went on to say, that he had come some distance across the country, was very cold and hungry, and if Monsieur had not already eaten his supper, would be most happy in being permitted to share that meal with him. Bodry was delighted to have a companion so agreeable, and acquiesced in the proposal most readily;

the supper was soon served, and over a bottle of Moulin à Vent, the wine for which Mâcon is still so famous, the young men rapidly made acquaintance. At twenty years of age, there are no reserves; Bodry entered into his own affairs without the slightest concealment, described his position, stated the object of his journey, and fairly acknowledged, in reply to a laughing question from the other, that he had no great vocation for his impending marriage.

In return for this confession, the stranger said, his name also was Henri — Henri Blaireau, — the son of an avocat at Bourg-en-Bresse; that he was not overburthened with money, but hoped to acquire it by following his father's profession, after he had studied enough law at the college in the Rue St. Jean de Beauvais. As to the law itself, it was not his choice; he would rather have spent a fortune, than be at the trouble of making one, — but what would you have?

The intimacy which thus sprang up between the travellers was not diminished by the time they reached Paris. On the contrary, it had grown into a strong friendship. Their habits and tastes were so closely allied, that what the one proposed, the other was sure to agree to.

Amongst the subjects which engaged them during the latter part of their journey was the question where they should lodge on their arrival in the capital. Bodry knew nothing of Paris, and therefore made no objection to the Quartier Latin when it was proposed by Blaireau; so they went to the Ecu d'Argent, in the Rue des Carmes — an auberge which the latter had heard his father praise, when slightly in his cups, as being the only place in Paris for drinking Vin de Beaune. It was not a

fashionable part of the town, but the college was near and the residence of Monsieur Gombert not remote.

Notwithstanding this proximity, it seemed that neither love nor law was meant to be the first consideration with Messieurs Bodry and Blaireau. Together, they saw the Marionettes on the Boulevard du Temple; together they went to dance at the gardens of the Colisée; together they dined at the Moulin de Janelle, the most celebrated of all the extra-mural taverns of Paris; together, they went everywhere, in short, except to the College of Law and the Church of Saint Merri.

One evening, when they were returning home, accident led them through the Rue Saint Martin, and a qualm of conscience came over Bodry when he remembered that he had been already three weeks in the capital without delivering his letter of introduction or making any inquiries after Monsieur Gombert and Mademoiselle Madeleine. A qualm of conscience sometimes arises from a physical cause. Henri Bodry was a little out of sorts, and proposed — like a certain gentleman when he fell sick — to do something extraordinary by way of amendment. When he reached the Ecu d'Argent, however, he felt so much worse that he went directly to bed; in the course of the night he was seized with a violent fever, and, though it in some degree abated on the following morning, he remained very ill. Nothing could exceed the kindness and attention of Henri Blaireau. He sat by his friend's bedside all night, ministered to all his wants, soothed him by his care and encouraged him by his conversation.

Bodry's discourse turned chiefly on what was uppermost in his mind at the moment of his seizure; and his desire to make the long-neglected visit was increased by

a letter which arrived from Lyons, asking him many questions respecting the silk merchant's family. But it was in vain he strove to rise; the fever still held him in thrall; yet, in the perversity of his malady, he persisted in declaring that the visit must immediately be paid. Henri Blaireau urged that Monsieur Gombert was not aware of his being in Paris, with various other arguments, and concluded by saying, that if his friend desired it, he would go to the Rue Saint Martin and explain the circumstances of the case.

This last suggestion operated singularly on the mind of the feverish invalid. Yes! Blaireau should go as he proposed; but he must not say a word about his illness, he must present himself as the real Bodry — keep Blaireau entirely out of sight — and by and by, when he was able to appear in person, they might make merry over the joke and laugh it entirely away. Blaireau combated this proposition at first; but, finding that his objections only increased his friend's nervous irritability, he consented.

His task was not a difficult one, for Monsieur Gombert knew very little of his correspondent's domestic affairs, and nothing personally of his future son-in-law. The worthy silk-merchant embraced his visitor with all the effusion which the approaching connection seemed to warrant, and met with a demonstration no less cordial. It was in Monsieur Gombert's counting-house that the greeting took place, but, the greeting over, the scene was changed to an inner apartment, where Madeleine with her *bonne*, who had nursed her from her cradle, was occupied with her embroidery. A feeling almost akin to envy was Blaireau's first sensation on seeing the beautiful girl to whom Bodry was betrothed, but it lasted

only a moment, being quickly superseded by the pleasure he experienced in looking at, and conversing with her. At the end of a couple of hours he found himself head over ears in love. On the other hand, the impression which he appeared to have made on Monsieur Gombert and his daughter, and on the old nurse, who had a voice in everything, was all he could have desired, provided always that he had been Henri Bodry, and not his temporary substitute.

Unwillingly, at last, he rose to take his departure, and lingered as he pressed the hand of Madeleine Gombert, which was not, he fancied, too suddenly withdrawn; neither did the expression of her countenance convey the idea that he would not be welcome when he renewed his visit. All this was consistent enough with the relation in which Henri Bodry stood towards the family Gombert; but, somehow or other, Blaireau could not divest himself of the notion — which ninety-nine Frenchmen out of a hundred would have entertained — that no small share of the reception accorded to him was a tribute to his own personal qualities.

On his return to the Rue des Carmes, he found Henri Bodry much worse. A physician was sent for; Blaireau was unremitting in his attention, but the fever increased alarmingly, and as evening drew on, he began to fear for his friend's life. At Bodry's request, Blaireau related to him all the particulars of the interview in the Rue Saint Martin, and the subject still engrossed the mind of the sick young man, to the exclusion of every other. Even when conscious of his own danger, he still continued the theme.

"I have often been ill," he said, "but never felt before as I feel now. Should I die, Henri Blaireau, por-

mise me here, that you will still be Henri Bodry. Think what a desolation it would be to Monsieur Gombert and Madeleine to be told of my death! Marry her, for my sake; then, I shall feel that I have done my duty in giving her the husband she expected. No, no, I am not lightheaded, I know very well what I say. Unless you promise this, I cannot die content."

Blaireau felt convinced that his friend's mind was wandering, but to keep him quiet, he again promised all that was required. For half-an-hour Bodry remained silent, and his anxious attendant believed he slept; but suddenly he rose up in bed, and a distressing change was apparent; his breathing came short and thick, his voice was faint and low, the hand of death was evidently upon him. Grasping Blaireau's arm convulsively, as if striving to draw him closer, he feebly whispered the word "Remember!" and then fell back dead.

II.

It was ten o'clock at night, and Monsieur Gombert was alone in his counting-house. Everything was silent in the apartment but the ticking of one of those large clocks, white-faced, blue-figured, and highly bedizened with gilding, which we call of the age of Louis Quatorze, though they belong to the time of his great-grandson. That clock had just struck ten, and the last stroke had hardly ceased to vibrate when Monsieur Gombert, who happened to raise his head, became aware of some one who was standing near the door. He had not heard anybody enter, perhaps because he had been absorbed in his accounts, and his astonishment — not unmixed with

fear, for he was of a nervous and timid nature — was very great.

“Who is there?” he asked with hesitation. “Is that — you — Jacques?”

Jacques was Monsieur Gombert’s confidential clerk; but no Jacques replied, and the silk merchant remained speechless, with his eyes still fixed on the figure which now slowly advanced a few steps, and, as it seemed to him, without noise. As the figure drew nearer, though the light from his solitary candle was very dim, Monsieur Gombert perceived a pale, hollow face which wore an expression of great anxiety; the eyes were wide open and glittered exceedingly, and a quantity of dark hair streamed wildly. Monsieur Gombert gasped for utterance, but it was denied him. The appearance came nearer still, and then Monsieur Gombert imagined — but doubted, notwithstanding — that he recognised features he had lately seen. This supposition gave him a glimmer of courage.

“My friend,” he said, “what brings you here at this hour?”

“Death!” answered the figure, in a deep, sepulchral voice.

“How! Death! Has any misfortune arrived?”

“The greatest that can happen to man. Henri Bodry died an hour ago. I come to invite you to his funeral!”

“You! you! But you are Henri Bodry!”

“I was — this morning!”

“Ah! Mon Dieu!” exclaimed the merchant, and fell senseless from his stool.

At his outcry and the noise he made in falling, Madeleine and old Petronille, the *bonne*, who were at work in the next room, rushed into the counting-house.

They supposed Monsieur Gombert was in a fit, and hastily applied such remedies as they could devise. After a few minutes the silk merchant opened his eyes.

"Where is he?" he said, looking round with horror.

"Who, sir?" asked Madeleine. "What do you mean?"

"Who?" he repeated slowly, again looking round him. "Who? Henri Bodry. He was here this moment."

"Impossible, sir!" said Petronille. "You were alone when we came, which we did on the instant you called out. There was not the shadow of a person in the room."

"The shadow!" returned Monsieur Gombert. "Ah, that is it. The shadow. It was no living being."

"I beseech you, my father," said Madeleine, "to tell us what is the matter. You look ill and frightened."

"I have reason to be so," replied Monsieur Gombert. "I have seen a spirit."

He then, as collectedly as he could, related what had occurred.

"This is a fancy," said Madeleine. Monsieur Gombert shook his head.

"A dream," observed Petronille. "You supped well on that famous goose of Alençon — you had more than one glass of Burgundy, in honour of Monsieur Bodry" — the silk merchant shivered — "over your books after supper, a wrong time, you became sleepy, an indigestion arrived — there!"

Ingenious reasoning, but not satisfactory to Monsieur Gombert.

"I saw him," he persisted, "as distinctly as I see either of you. It was the face of a dead man. He invited me to his funeral."

These words and the earnestness with which Mon-

sieur Gombert spoke infected Madeleine and Petronille with some of his own fear: they also looked timidly about them, dreading to behold some hideous apparition.

Mademoiselle Gombert was the first to regain her presence of mind.

"Let somebody be sent at once to ask news of him."

This suggestion was immediately adopted. Jacques, the confidential clerk, who lived in the house with the rest, was thought the most proper person to employ; and, without being made aware of the motive which had led to his errand, was directed to ask if Monsieur Henri Bodry could come and see Monsieur Gombert directly. In less than half an hour he returned, with a countenance much discomposed.

"Sir," said he, to Monsieur Gombert, "I bring you very sad tidings. The young gentleman who came here only this morning so full of life and spirits, died about an hour ago!"

Madeleine Gombert was thunderstruck. She could scarcely believe her ears. But it was more than astonishment. There was a pang at her heart. That fine, handsome young man, who had so much interested her!

Monsieur Gombert felt very ill, and went at once to bed. Old Petronille and his daughter kept watch beside him with as many candles burning as there were candlesticks in the house to hold them; and, further to scare away all evil spirits, Madeleine read aloud the Office des Morts, Monsieur Gombert joining fervently at the end of every psalm with the anthem "Heu mihi!"

So much affected, indeed, was the honest silk-merchant by the sudden death of his correspondent's son, that he did not get the better of the shock for several days. To attend Henri Bodry's funeral was entirely out

of the question; and the knowledge that it had taken place while he was confined to his room, materially contributed to his recovery.

"Once fairly underground," thought Monsieur Gombert, "he is not so likely to pay me another visit, unless — unless" — and this doubt harassed him sorely, "unless he is vexed at my not having complied with his wishes."

As for Madeleine, poor girl, she talked over the sad event with old Petronille: it was the only consolation she could find for the loss of her lover. She also sought comfort in devotion, and instead of going now and then when the day was fine, went regularly morning and evening to mass in the church of Saint Merri.

III.

IN the meanwhile Henri Blaireau had paid the last offices to his friend in the Cemetery of the Innocents — at that time the place of burial for half the people of Paris — and had written an account of his untimely death to the elder Bodry at Lyons, informing him that all his son's effects were under seal. These pious duties performed, he directed his thoughts to what concerned himself. But he found the study of the law much more distasteful to him now than it had even been before. In vain he pored over Pandects and delved into Digests; nothing came of it; one object always kept floating between his eyes and the page, which neutralised all his toil; and that object was the smiling face of Madeleine Gombert.

"How unfortunate," he constantly reflected, "that I should have presented myself in the name of another

man! She had never seen Henri Bodry — not even friendship subsisted between them; her regret, if she feels any, must all be on my account, and I — unhappy wretch that I am! — I have made myself my own rival! If Monsieur Gombert had accepted the invitation to the funeral, I could then have explained my poor friend's caprice, but to attempt to do so now would expose me to I know not what odious accusations."

This hourly Jeremiad made him, of course, much less of a lawyer and much more of a lover than ever, and it always ended in his throwing aside his books and wandering forth to the Rue Saint Martin.

One rainy evening, weary of pacing up and down the dark, damp street without any reward, he stood up for shelter in the porch of Saint Merri. The vesper service was going on, and, thinking the inside of the church more comfortable than the out, Henri Blaireau pushed open the little baize door and entered. The interior was nearly as obscure as the street he had left, for Saint Merri is a large church, and was very dimly lighted. The congregation, as thin as it generally is at vespers on a raw, foggy, wet winter's evening, seemed to consist of only a few old women, and Henri roamed undisturbed through the aisles, thinking, as usual, of Madeleine Gombert. He had twice crossed the small lateral chapel which stands on the south side of the building without noticing that anyone was there; but the third time he passed, his attention was attracted by a female figure kneeling before an altar dedicated to the Virgin. Something besides curiosity prompted him to stop and gaze. He did more than stop; he drew nearer, placing himself discreetly behind a massive pillar, the better to obtain a view of her face. For some time she

remained absorbed in prayer. At length she raised her head, and the lamp above the image of Our Lady shedding its rays full on the worshipper, revealed to him the features of Madeleine Gombert. He uttered an exclamation of surprise, at which Madeleine looked round in the direction from whence the sound proceeded; but she soon withdrew them, unable, apparently, to penetrate the gloom. Once more she prayed, and Henri felt an almost irresistible longing to cast himself on his knees before the same altar and pray there, too. But the fear of disturbing her made him pause, and while he hesitated she rose. She did not perceive that she was not alone in the chapel, and came up to the spot where he stood. He put out his hand and caught her by the sleeve. She turned quickly, and, lighted by the altar lamp, beheld, close to her, the countenance of the man for the repose of whose soul she had just been praying. The sight was enough to startle the strongest nerves. "Heaven! Monsieur Henri!" she cried. "Save me, Mother of Grace!" and as fast as her feet could carry her she rushed to the chancel door.

To run after her was Henri Blaireau's first impulse, but he had not gone three yards before he tripped over an old woman who was fast asleep (at her prayers) in the aisle, and came down on the pavement with a crash. In the midst of a furious scolding, Blaireau picked himself up as well as he could, and then, remembering for the first time what was due to the proprieties of a church, desisted from further pursuit. To quiet the old woman, whose occupation (besides praying) was the letting of rush-bottomed chairs to the pious, he gave her all the sous he had in his pocket, and then stole away on tip-toe, thinking himself lucky in not having drawn

on his head the fulmination of the officiating priest. Once outside, he quickened his steps; but all his haste was vain: he only arrived within sight of Monsieur Gombert's door to see the skirt of Madeleine's garment disappear as the portal was closed.

Could he not find a lodging in the Rue St. Martin, — could he not find a lodging in the very house where Monsieur Gombert dwelt?

He resolved to return next day and see about it. Fortune might be more propitious the next time he encountered the beautiful Madeleine; at all events, he would enjoy the melancholy pleasure — this is the way a lover always puts it — of seeing the object of his affections, even if he were himself unseen.

Mademoiselle Gombert said nothing to her father about her fright in the church of St. Merri, but she made a confidante of Petronille. The old bonne crossed herself on hearing the fearful tale, and asked a great many questions. In what form did the apparition present itself, — did it wear a shroud, — was it very pale, — did it speak, — had it a smell of sulphur? All that Madeleine could say in reply was, that the spirit appeared to her to be dressed in the usual male costume, and looked exactly like Monsieur Henri Bodry.

IV.

THE next morning, in order the better to execute his project unobserved, Henri Blaireau set off to the Rue de la Grande Friperie, where he bought at one of the numerous second-hand shops in that useful quarter, a three-cornered military hat and a long, grey dragoon-cloak, which last, though it had seen at least twenty

years' service, was declared by the conscientious merchant who sold it to be better than new. Wrapping himself closely in his dragoon's costume, he then proceeded to the Rue Saint Martin, and carefully reconnoitred Monsieur Gombert's house once more. Daylight enabled him to discover what had been hidden by the darkness of night, the very thing he desired: on one of the door-posts of the open gateway was an écriteau announcing that a garni, or furnished room, was to be let, application to be made to the concierge. It was not on the ground floor, for these were the silk merchant's ware-rooms; neither was it on the first floor (the house had no entresol), for there were located Monsieur Gombert and his family; neither was it on the third floor — but without stopping at every landing-place, let us climb at once to the top of the staircase, open the door of a chamber, familiarly termed a mansard or garret, and there we have the joli appartement, bien meublé, as the concierge poetically described it. What furnished it well, consisted of a truckle bed without hangings, two rickety chairs and a still more rickety table; what made it handsome was, perhaps, the flooring of red tiles which, in spite of their colour, did not make the room look warm. It was, in short, a wretched hole, and Henri Blaireau shivered as he cast his eyes round it, but then he was under the same roof with the maid he loved, and that reconciled him, of course, to its wretchedness. He returned to the Ecu d'Argent, settled his account, and loading an Auvergnat with his own and his deceased friend's trunks — a weight which the strongest mule might well have refused to carry — finally installed himself in his delectable abode.

But there was one obstacle to complete concealment

which no precaution could overcome. If there be any particular spot on the face of the globe, where gossip holds its head-quarters, it is in a Paris porter's lodge, and this was equally the fact in the reign of Louis the Fifteenth as it is in the reign of Napoleon the Third. The occupants of the lodge at Monsieur Gombert's were Pierre and Phrosine, an elderly couple, whose surname was Le Pocheux: the former had been for many years a soldier, the latter everything in the menial line, and their marriage had been as much an *affaire de convenance* as if his father had called himself De Rohan and hers De Montmorency. Gossip was the staple of their intellectual existence, and though there did not appear to be much food for it in so simple a circumstance as the hiring of a garret at ten livres a quarter, yet the military externals of the new lodger had fixed the attention of Monsieur Pierre, whose scrutiny inclined him to think that the dress and its wearer did not altogether correspond: so much baggage, too, was incompatible with the condition of a person who took up his lodging under the eaves; and, finally, Madame Phrosine had taken particular notice of very white hands, very bright eyes, and a very handsome face, as far as the cocked hat and the cape of the cloak allowed them to be visible.

The greatest ally of Monsieur and Madame Le Pocheux was, naturally, Madame Petronille (they never failed to salute each other with the prefix which I have adopted), and to her they imparted the news of the stranger's arrival, accompanied by their own enlightened commentaries. Gossip is the mother of a great many children, and her eldest-born is Curiosity. The old *bonne* became curious about the mysterious dragoon, and it was not long before her curiosity was shared by

Mademoiselle Gombert. To have a peep at him, on the first opportunity, was Petronille's expressed intention.

For the first hour or two after he was established in his new quarters, Henri Blaireau found occupation enough in trying to make it look more habitable; but when this process was at an end, and he found that, stretch his neck as he might from his solitary window (which only overlooked a court-yard), he could see nothing of the apartment in which Mademoiselle Gombert resided, he began to get very impatient of confinement, and yearned to approach her more nearly. But to leave his room in broad daylight would be to court unnecessary observation, so he waited till it was dusk before he issued from his den. Then, wearing the attire on which he counted for disguise, in the event of his meeting Monsieur Gombert, he slowly descended the staircase, lingering at every step as he drew near the first floor. He had arrived at the last turning when he observed some one standing in the doorway of Monsieur Gombert's suite of rooms. There was just light enough for him to see that it was a woman; his heart at once told him who it was, — and clearing the flight at a bound, he stood before her. She did not alter her position, but remained behind the shadow of the door. He was encouraged to speak, and after the ceremonious fashion of his time and nation, took off his hat as he did so; scarcely had he uttered a word, before a violent scream saluted him, the door was slammed in his face, and he heard the cry of "Murder!" vociferated within, in the shrillest of female tones.

He rushed down-stairs; and, the porte cochère being not yet closed, reached the street without detention.

Petronille, for she it was who had been lying in

ambush, continued to exercise her lungs, as she floundered on the parquet, without daring to lift her head, until she brought round her the whole of Monsieur Gombert's household, with the exception of Madeleine, who, more piously disposed than ever, had gone again to vesper service, in the church of Saint Merri.

"But what is the matter, my poor Petronille?" said Monsieur Gombert, as they raised the old woman, and conducted her into an inner room.

"Oh, sir! sir!" she replied, with hysterical effort; "I have seen him — I — myself!"

"Seen whom, Petronille?" asked the silk-merchant, tremulously.

"Fresh from the grave, in his winding-sheet, — with eyes like burning charcoal!"

Monsieur Gombert groaned instinctively, and did not repeat his question; Jacques, the clerk, Marie, the cook, and Felicité, the fille-de-chamber, were, however, clamorous to hear all.

"But tell us, Petronille, for the love of Heaven!"

"One, two, three, — as slowly as the clock strikes, I heard him descending the staircase, just as I was holding the door in my hand, after letting out Mademoiselle, when she went to vespers. How can I tell why I waited to see who might be coming? These things are fate! Suddenly, before I knew what had happened, he stood within a yard of me. I might have touched him. Then I saw his face! The face of the young gentleman from Lyons, who died last week at the Ecu d'Argent, in the Rue des Carmes. The face of Monsieur Bodry!"

Monsieur Gombert dropped into a chair, unable to utter a word; consternation was depicted on every

countenance; and a loud knocking was heard at the outer door.

Everybody (Monsieur Gombert only excepted) screamed again; and Pierre, the concierge, came in, amazed, removing from his head a little skull-cap, made of carpet.

"Monsieur Pierre," shrieked Petronille, "I have seen a ghost!"

"Bah!" replied Pierre, "I've seen five thousand. A ghost and a dead man are much the same thing, I imagine. When one sleeps on the field of battle, one sees plenty of ghosts."

"Ah, but they don't walk, Pierre, those dead people," replied Petronille.

"Very odd, if they did," said Pierre, "when their legs are shot away."

The obstinacy of the old soldier did more to recover Petronille, than even his corporeal presence, and with as much emphasis, but more circumstance, she repeated her adventure. Still Pierre shook his head.

"But Monsieur Gombert," continued the bonne, "has been visited by the same ghost. It is the ghost of a young man! He came to him an hour after his death. And what will you say, when I tell you, — my duty now compels me to reveal it, — that Mademoiselle Gombert, in her turn, has seen the spirit? No later than yesterday evening it appeared to her in the church of Saint Merri. On that account, she has gone again to-night, to consult Monsieur le Curé."

"What is that you say?" cried Monsieur Gombert. "Oh, my good friend Pierre, run to the church and bid her return instantly! Also, ask Monsieur le Curé to come as soon as the service is over."

The concierge no longer presumed openly to deny

what was affirmed on so much higher authority, but he obeyed Monsieur Gombert's orders, and set off at once.

V.

WHEN Henri Blaireau got into the street, he was at a loss what to do next. One set of inclinations prompted him, to go and get some dinner; another set of inclinations, — loftier, nobler, altogether more becoming a lover — led him to follow the route which Mademoiselle Gombert had just taken.

Accordingly, he also bent his footsteps to the church of Saint Merri. Arrived there, he made no pause in the porch, lingered not an instant in the nave, took no heed of priests or old women, but plunging into the south aisle, steered his way softly through the labyrinth of piled up chairs, till he came to the chapel of the Virgin. What was his delight, as he cautiously peeped from behind the pillar where he had stood the evening before, when, in the same attitude and in front of the same altar, he beheld Mademoiselle Gombert!

Experience had taught him wisdom. His unlucky features, he resolved, should not get him into a scrape again. He advanced, therefore, at a quick step, covered his face with both hands, took advantage of a devotee's privilege by plumping himself on his knees beside Madeleine, and bending down his head, began to pray with great fervour.

Though such an association in worship was not so uncommon as to be remarkable, Mademoiselle Gombert felt a little uncomfortable at the close proximity of the stranger.

"Beata mater," murmured the new suppliant, "et

intacta virgo, gloriosa regina mundi, intercede pro nobis ad —" He paused for a moment or two, and then, turning towards Mademoiselle Gombert, substituted for the right word, "*Magdalenam*;" and, before she could recover from her astonishment, he added:

"Forgive me, Mademoiselle; but in me you behold the person who, last night, unhappily caused you trouble."

Madeleine rose hastily to her feet, and moved from the chapel; but she was overtaken by Henri Blaireau before she had gone many steps.

"Can it be?" she said, faintly. "Do the dead return to this world?"

"Not the dead," said Henri, seizing her hand; "not the dead, but the living."

Madeleine's senses could not resist the fact of a human hand being clasped in hers, — a hand warm as her own. The voice, too, that breathed in her ear had no sepulchral tone.

"If not the dead, who and what are you? The face I saw was that of Henri Bodry."

"Mademoiselle, forgive a deception which was not premeditated, — nay, was almost involuntary. Henri Bodry is, indeed, no more; but I am not Henri Bodry. O, you will pardon me, Mademoiselle Gombert, when you have heard my story."

There was something so persuasive in his manner, that Madeleine was induced to listen. He was not a good common-lawyer, but he was an excellent special pleader. Is it necessary, then, to add that his suit was not unprosperous.

"There is," said a rough but cheery sort of voice close behind them — the voice of Pierre the old con-

cierge, carpet-cap in hand, and on the broad grin — “I don’t know what to-do at home, ma’msell’. Madame Petronille has been in fits, and everybody is distracted at having seen a ghost. I’m afraid,” he added, turning to Henri, “I’m afraid it was yours, Monsieur.”

The stir at Monsieur Gombert’s house had scarcely subsided, when Madeleine entered.

“Father!” she cried, running into his arms, “I grieve for your distress — for poor Petronille’s — but there is one behind me (do not be alarmed at a mere personal resemblance) who can explain all.”

About a quarter-of-an-hour afterwards, the curé of Saint Merri was announced.

Monsieur Gombert went with a smiling air to meet him.

“I don’t know,” he said, “what you will think of my dilemma. I sent for your spiritual aid; but instead of an exorcism, I think I will, upon the whole, ask you to have the kindness to bestow a blessing!”

MR. PEARSON.

INTERLACHEN, 25th September, 1857.

DEAREST SISTER,

I promised I would tell you faithfully all the events of that great day of my life — I could not bear to think of those things, still less to write about them, till time had somewhat calmed the terrible effect they had upon my whole being; indeed even now I am sure a recurrence to that day will cause me much pain — but I will redeem my promise. I shall relate to you the events just as they occurred, and the manner in which they affected me.

You know how reluctant a consent papa gave to my engagement with Ernest — how long and vehemently he opposed it, forbidding Ernest the house, and using every means in his power to make me forget him. I was forced into all the gaiety of the London season, and then nothing would do but I must accompany papa to the German baths. It was of no avail; I was so very unhappy, that I at last grew seriously ill, and we returned to England. I know my complaint quite puzzled that dear good Dr. Roberts: one day he half guessed, and I half confessed the cause, and then he had a long conversation with papa, after which papa gave way, and allowed Ernest to visit at our house.

It was a great delight to see Ernest again — to be

able to talk to him, to listen to all he had to say about his dearly loved painting. Yet there were a great many things to hinder perfect happiness. Papa and Ernest never got on together, they are so differently constituted — papa, a man of business, and Ernest all for art; and papa never seemed to be able to forgive him for having attracted my love. He was often very taunting and hard to Ernest, hinting that he chiefly cared for me because I was the daughter of a rich man. So half the time I spent with Ernest was occupied in smoothing down matters, and in trying to explain away the sharp things papa had said; for I knew Ernest, with his high spirit, felt all this conduct very deeply, and I was in constant fear, day after day, that Ernest would answer papa in his own language, that there would be a complete rupture between them, and that I should again lose Ernest.

Affairs did not improve — all my attempts to promote a better understanding between papa and Ernest failed entirely, and then I became sensible of a gradual change in Ernest's manner. He would become at times strangely absorbed in thought, breaking suddenly away from the subject of conversation, and appearing irritated even with me when I attempted to arouse him.

There was evidently something pressing on Ernest's mind. I tried hard to discover the cause, whether it was that he dwelt on papa's unkind remarks, or whether pecuniary matters embarrassed him; all my attempts were in vain.

On the second Wednesday in last July, papa came down to breakfast not in the best of humour; he had had a touch of the gout in the night, so by my persuasion he gave up going to town, and I wrote off to

Dr. Roberts to ask him, if possible, to call on papa during the day.

You know how irritable the gout always renders papa, and though I always try to make every allowance for him, I was certainly very much hurt by his manner of talking about Ernest, and I begged that he would change the subject. At that moment the servant announced that Ernest had called: I was in hopes that papa had not heard the man, and I whispered to him to say that his master was ill and that I could not see any one; but unfortunately papa did hear what the servant had said, and would insist on Ernest being shown into the room, remarking that he would not have it thrown in his teeth that he had again turned my lover from the door.

Oh, Clara! I could have given worlds if Ernest had not called that day; I felt from papa's irritable condition that a collision was inevitable. I taxed myself to the utmost to discover some topic interesting to papa — money matters, politics; but no, papa would harp on art, and the beggarly remuneration of second-rate painters. Poor Ernest! I saw, for my sake, how manfully he struggled to govern his temper. How truly I felt for him! And then, most provokingly, John informed me that the Bennett girls had called, and must see me, if it were only for a minute, about an election to the Orphan Asylum of a little girl in whom I was much interested. I was forced with sad forebodings to leave the room. Alas! my five minutes' absence produced a sad result. Ernest, sorely provoked, had answered papa; they had quarrelled, and bitter things had been said on both sides. Papa, I found, had left the room, and there was Ernest pale and trembling — his angry feeling of resentment,

long suppressed, had complete mastery of him. I urged every excuse I could think of for papa's conduct, but in vain.

In my despair I cried, "Oh, Ernest, all this will kill me."

"Better die than lead the life I lead," he replied. "Curses on this slow dragging justice! Better be a beggar at once, than tremble at the quibbling chances of law."

Then I found it was a law-suit that had been troubling him all this while, and I complained that he had not before confided to me a subject which was trying him so sadly, but he declared I had sorrow and worry enough at home for my share. At length he talked more calmly, his old countenance came back again, and I left him to seek papa.

Clara, I will let all that conversation with papa pass untold; all I could say, all my entreaties had no weight, and I returned with a heavy heart to Ernest, to tell him he must leave the house — that I would write to him — that I trusted time would lull papa's resentment and anger.

To my surprise I found a stranger in the room with Ernest. Ernest introduced me to this gentleman, it was his solicitor and old friend, Mr. Pearson. He had started off from town post-haste, learning where Ernest was, to tell him that judgment had just been given in his cause — favourable judgment, which made Ernest immensely rich. All this Mr. Pearson told me himself in a very matter-of-fact manner, for he would scarcely suffer Ernest to speak — he was so anxious that Ernest should not over-excite himself with the good news. I recollect thinking it odd that Mr. Pearson, being an old friend,

did not show greater elation at the success of the suit. Ernest thought so too, and he expressed some surprise on the point, but Mr. Pearson assured Ernest that he felt truly delighted in congratulating him on his good fortune: he had come from town for that purpose at some inconvenience: he felt also not a little proud at the success which had attended his own professional efforts — however, he had known so many unfortunate circumstances arising from the shock occasioned by sudden fortune, that he always made it a rule to exercise a strong restraint upon his feelings — to keep himself perfectly calm, and never to allow the mind to lose its due balance. Indeed, we had some ado to get Mr. Pearson into the adjoining library on the plea of luncheon (for of course Ernest wanted to talk to me alone) so urgent was he in his recommendations to Ernest to restrain his exultation.

Mr. Pearson's advice appeared very seasonable and judicious; Ernest's elation of spirits almost terrified me; I did my best to calm him. It was a difficult task — it seemed as if a new nature had been created in him — a nature which had its birth in the morning's quarrel with papa. Or rather, perhaps, that long suppression of strong feeling which he had been forced to exercise when he was too poor to resent insult and injustice, had been suddenly flung away, and natural passion had its sway. He talked so wildly of the power of gold, so scornfully of the world, that my heart ached to hear him. He recalled many an old insult cast upon him — how people who had wronged him would cringe now, people who had dealt very hardly with him in his long, up-struggling artist career; and then it seemed to delight him to tell me he would crowd every fine thing

round me that money could procure — all this told with his rich artist fancy in fluent words.

I replied that I had loved him dearly without riches, and that no gold could increase my love.

“True, true,” he answered, clasping me tightly; “but gold is the world’s blessing on our union — nothing on earth can divide us now.”

Mr. Pearson then came in from the library, and said that papa wished to see me directly.

I recollected that Mr. Pearson and papa were acquainted in business. I went into the library with a light heart. “Surely,” I thought, “Mr. Pearson has told papa of Ernest’s good fortune.” Papa was sitting in his easy chair: he seemed buried in thought.

“Dear papa,” I cried, “you have heard the good news.” He did not appear to listen to me. I knelt beside him, and looked into his face. “You will forgive all, and consent to our marriage now?” I said.

“Ay,” he replied, bitterly, without raising his head, “we are equals now, Ernest and myself.”

“Both rich!” I exclaimed.

“Beggars, child!” was his reply.

I was completely mystified: with much difficulty I drew from papa in painful words that he was ruined. It appeared that Mr. Pearson had mentioned incidentally, in conversation, while they were talking of city matters, that Westby’s bank had most unexpectedly stopped payment that morning at eleven o’clock.

I knew that papa was in many ways very closely connected with that establishment.

Papa was as one stunned. I felt this calamity very deeply: scarcely on my own account but on his, for I had begun to hate great riches which had separated me

so long from Ernest. Yet I had dear thoughts of all I could now do to comfort papa — to show how sensible I was of his solicitude for my welfare, mistaken though it was; that it was only my love for Ernest, feeling that I was his wife in God's sight, which had caused me to oppose his wishes. Then I told him all about Ernest's fortune, which, to my astonishment, I found Mr. Pearson had omitted to do; but I supposed that papa was too concerned about the bank to allow of his doing so. I tried to my utmost to comfort him, he still leaning forward in his arm-chair, his head buried in his hands. I said I knew that he and Ernest would be friends for my sake, and that we should be all so happy.

He answered me at last, in a thick voice, "There, Fanny, go and tell your lover that I am ruined — bankrupt. Leave me now, I want to collect my thoughts — worse, worse than that."

What "worse" meant, I could not divine, but the way in which the words were uttered made me tremble; and, as I left the room, he called to me "not to let Dr. Roberts see him — the gout was all well — he was too engaged; he must not see Dr. Roberts."

I wanted to confide all this sad affair to Ernest, and I expected to find him in the drawing-room.

Mr. Pearson was alone in the drawing-room.

I asked him if he knew where Ernest was? He answered me evasively, and began immediately to talk in a tone of commiseration about papa's affairs. I considered this impertinent, and expressed my opinion on the point. He begged my pardon, and said that he felt sadly embarrassed, but duty towards his client compelled him to address me on a subject of deep importance; indeed, Ernest had deputed him to do so. I felt greatly

surprised that Ernest should have authorised another to communicate with me. I would have sought Ernest, and prayed him to tell me with his own lips whatever I ought to know, but my feet were fixed to the spot, and Mr. Pearson seemed to possess a strange influence over me. He made me sit down, and then, with hideously precise language, lengthened out my agony — I besought him to speak the worst at once, but he would persist in his slow measured tone and long explanations — he told me that our match was to be broken off.

I could not believe what he said. I bade him speak again, and he repeated what he had said with terrible emphasis.

Oh, Clara, you can never understand what I felt! this love of ours which, alone of all things on earth had seemed founded on a rock, which I had clung to with desperation — I cannot dwell on it, I must hurry on.

I muttered Ernest's words; "nothing on earth can divide us now." "My father may be bankrupt — ruined — but Ernest must be true." I turned indignantly on Mr. Pearson, and told him he spoke falsely.

Mr. Pearson was perfectly unmoved by my angry words; his countenance never changed; he bent his head towards mine; I shuddered as I felt his breath at my ear, and then he whispered one terrible word. I cannot write that word, Clara; a sharp pang shot through my heart: I shrieked, and fell back in my chair. Ernest was at my feet. "Oh! Ernest," I said, "tell me very quickly that this is not true."

He kept his face as much as possible averted from me, and spoke with great difficulty. "Alas, Fanny!

Pearson has told us this dreadful secret, this terrible bar to our union!"

I could hear no more. I cried "Ernest! save papa!" There was a horrible vision, swimming before my eyes; papa disgraced irretrievably before the world — dragged from home — tried in a court of justice! I still cried, "Oh, Ernest, in mercy save papa, if you forsake me!" It seems that I fainted; when I recovered, I thought I was addressing Ernest, but it was dear Dr. Roberts who stood beside me.

Dr. Roberts had been such a true friend to me — a father could not have been kinder — that his coming at such a moment seemed a mercy from Heaven. My first impulse was to tell him everything and beg his advice, but then I recollected that papa had said that he must not see Dr. Roberts; and, at that moment, the terrible reason of those words darted into my mind. I knew that papa had been intrusted with the investment of the greater portion of Dr. Roberts's property. I could not utter a word.

Everyone has heard of Dr. Roberts's reputation; few know how truly excellent a man he is. He spoke to me so wisely and kindly, praying I might have strength to support the bitter trial. Oh, Clara! it was so sad! I would gladly have followed his prayer, word by word: but I could only pray silently that this dear friend might, on his own part, be blessed with that strength to bear misfortune which he was invoking on my behalf.

And then he told me about Ernest. Whilst I was insensible, it appeared that Dr. Roberts had called upon papa, in consequence of my note of the morning. The servant told him that I had fainted; he came directly to see me, and gave the necessary directions for my re-

covery. Mr. Pearson then took him aside, and confessed, with great show of contrition, that he had, with culpable weakness, withheld from Ernest a secret intrusted to his, Pearson's, father, by Ernest's father, Colonel Bradby, who was, as you know, an Indian officer. Ernest had been sent from India for his education, and had been placed under old Pearson's care. Colonel Bradby died shortly after his son arrived in England. The secret was, that Colonel Bradby had been allowed by her parents to marry a lady in whose family he afterwards discovered there was insanity; that Ernest bore the hereditary taint; that Colonel Bradby had left it as his solemn charge that his son should never marry.

This was the terrible bar to our union! Sad as it was, there was consolation in finding that Ernest was yet true to me; I would be true to him, poor fellow. I declared this solemnly to Dr. Roberts — faithful to the end of life! I might still have his love and sympathy, though from afar off. But why had not Pearson told me this secret himself? It was very strange!

And then Dr. Roberts desired to see papa.

I hesitated what to say. At last I asked, if he had not heard the sad news?

"What news?"

"Westby's bank stopped this morning at eleven!"

"Why, my dear," he replied in amazement, "I got a cheque cashed there at twelve o'clock, and had a five minutes chat with Westby himself."

* * * * *

Ernest has just come into our room; I tried to hide my eyes, but he soon found that I had been crying, and would know the cause. He says he is very angry that I should have upset myself with writing about that sad-

dest day of our courtship. He won't let me write anything more on the subject; but I have already nearly given you the whole account. How extraordinary to think that all the pain we suffered that day should have been the work of that poor insane Pearson, who, with the most terrible cunning, invented such plausible stories, in the terror of which to hide his own malady! Even Dr. Roberts was at first quite deceived by his manner. It seems, poor man, for some days previously his clerks had observed much strangeness in his demeanour. The story he told of Ernest was word for word true of his own family and condition.

I sometimes tell Ernest that we owe our present happiness to the painful distress of that day. I scarcely think we should have been married yet; for Ernest's law-suit really ended, as you are aware, in a judgment against him, had not Dr. Roberts told papa that he would not answer for my life if I had to undergo any more of such wearing trouble and anxiety. So papa made us an allowance, and with what Ernest gets by painting, it is quite as much as we require.

We are so happy. Ernest generally paints in the open air, and I sit near him working, or sketching under his tuition. He has just finished such a lovely landscape; a view from a hill near Interlachen, of the pasture land between the two lakes Thun and Brienz, with the castle of Unspunnen, Manfred's castle, and the gorge of the Lauterbrunnen valley in the background. We walked to this point of view the day after we arrived at Interlachen — a stormy day, with gleams of bright sunshine. We traversed an ascending path through thick pines which shut out the view till we had attained the summit of the hill; and then broke upon us

the wonderful landscape, bright sunshine in the foreground rendering every object and colour in the green pasture level intensely visible; but higher up, concealing the Jungfrau, closing over the Lauterbrunnen gorge, hung a mass of dense black cloud, and from widest point to point of the view, framing the whole scene, sprung a rainbow of vivid hues. This scene could not have been witnessed in all its beauty from any other spot than the one we occupied; and we were alone. The feeling of this impressed us very deeply. Before we left, the lovely rainbow had died away, and the bright sunshine, and the whole landscape was dark with rain. I thought of Ernest's words, "Nothing on earth can divide us now." Amid our great happiness the scene we had witnessed seemed like a solemn but gentle admonition from Heaven of the transitoriness of earthly things. * * * In a few days we start for Italy and Rome.

To Mrs. Anderson, 18, London Street, Sydney.

SHADOWLESS MEN.

ADELBERT VON CHAMISSE explained the meaning of the history of Peter Schlemihl, the shadowless man, in the preface to a French translation of his tale. The solid body alone casts a shadow. "The science of finance instructs us sufficiently respecting the value of money; the value of a shadow is less generally acknowledged. My thoughtless friend was covetous of money, of which he knew the value, and forgot to think upon solid substance." Chamisso wrote Peter Schlemihl in a Prussian solitude, in which he devoted himself to botany and zoology, and in the year eighteen hundred and thirteen, when the insolidity of the type Frenchman — Bonaparte — was the great fact of the time. Whether conqueror or covetous man, he who forgets the essential for the accessory sells his shadow to the Grey Man. "It was," says Chamisso, "the wish of my friend that the lesson which he had paid for so dearly should be turned to our profit, and his bitter experience calls to us with a loud voice, 'Think on the solid — the substantial!'"

Modern society is alarmed every few years by shadowless men. Families were ruined in eighteen hundred and forty-seven by their speculations, and in eighteen hundred and fifty-seven by their accommodation-bills. They are a constant source of danger for the

heads of homes. Ladies closely tied to them are continually having their lives blighted by them. They make many young ladies governesses. They prey regularly upon the savings of self-denial. Their depredations trouble the first nourishment of infancy, and the last sands of life. The little boy at school hears of them as terrible monsters who have blasted his prospects; the old man feels them stripping his head of his white hairs, and making the grave seem preferable to human deceit. Footpads and highwaymen, burglars and bandits, may be more brutal, but they are not more dangerous, than shadowless men. Those roughs may brain their victims, and take their money, but they leave the wives and the children of their victims, their ships, their houses, and their lands. Shadowless men are so fair, smooth, and flattering in their proceedings, that it may be fancied they leave the brains of their victims untouched. The difference, nevertheless, is less than it looks; for, if they do not dash the brains of their victims out at once with blows, they fill them with the hot coals of grief until they consume with fire. The track of a shadowless man can always be traced by the burning heads he has left on the way. It is indeed frightful to think how they fill churchyards and lunatic asylums.

Hurry to be rich, marks the shadowless man. I know not whether the shadowless man always says to himself before hand "I will take the fortune, fire the brain, and blast the life of such a one." Probably he pursues his own ends and chances the rest. Poor Richard says, "who dainties love, will beggars prove," but shadowless men contrive to take dainties to themselves, and give the beggary to other people. The precept which presides over their training is the proverb,

"To be poor, and appear poor, is the devil all over." The only devils they fear are "poor devils." The Spartan mother of a shadowless man said to him on her death-bed, "Remember, my son, that you were brought up to eat plumpudding;" and her son has always eaten plumpudding, and has always been surrounded by a circle of folks who go without. Poor Richard says, "silks and satins, scarlets and velvets, put out the kitchen fire," and "fat kitchens make lean wills;" but the progress of science has changed all that. The improved process consists in my putting out the kitchen fires of other people, in a way which pays my own draper's bills, and of extracting from folks who will have to make lean wills, the materials for my own fat kitchen.

I grew up in the district which had the benefit of the operations of the great firm of Bubble, Bill, Dazzlem, Drainem, and Company. Never were there more insolent people, and the more insolent they were, the more they were looked up to. It is quite true; they were spoken of reverentially as if they were superior beings. The reverence was all but universal. Dazzlem especially, the aged founder of the house, was looked upon with admiration and awe. Elderly men pointed him out to their boys, saying: "That man when a boy, kept a stall and sold penny hanks of thread in the market-place, and now he has branch-houses all round the world." The ox-herd who, in India, made himself a king of kings, was boasted of in Asia, and the soldier

"Who, born no king, made monarchs draw his car," is boasted of in Europe, just as Dazzlem was boasted of in his native county.

No doubt there are exceptions to the rule of reverence. There were men getting up in years who had been better

off, who had had dealings with the great firm, and had been unfortunate, who were silent respecting them when sober, but who spoke of them when in drink with fierce invectives. These men, however, were spoken of in the town with contempt as poor creatures, "who never harmed anybody but themselves;" which is, apparently, a sufficient slur in itself. The other decriers or backbiters were old ladies with long pedigrees, long traditions, long memories, long tongues, small lodgings, and small incomes. The ladies of the great firm were, it is true, as insolent and exclusive as their lords, and the old ladies did not spare the stuck-up people.

During years also, when there were strikes and corn-riots in Doem, the radicals and lock-outs mobbed, several times, the town mansions of the great firm. Never shall I forget seeing one of these corn-mobs when I was a little boy. The pale, haggard, ragged men, women, and children, with delirious eyes and voices, photographed themselves upon my brain. The mob shouted forth under the windows the low prices which they were no longer paid for their labour. The Doem journal, however, wrote contemptuously of the mob as tag, rag, and bobtail; and a man in the mob said it was true they were the refuse of the riches of the great firm, the cinders which had smelted their precious metals. But, these were only specks upon their glory, the dark sides of their silvery clouds.

The Earl of Doemshire always dined with Dazzlem when he passed through Doem. The generals who came to review the troops in the garrison, always dined with Dazzlem. Lieutenants, captains, majors, never crossed his threshold; but he exchanged cards, dinners, and visits

with the colonels commanding the regiments. The portrait of Dazzlem was painted by a great portrait painter for the Doem town-hall. Indeed, successively, as the members of the great firm were getting up in years, their portraits were hung for the admiration, as their example was orally described for the imitation, of posterity. It was a maxim with Dazzlem that "the people will have men with handles to their names," and he added to his name both affixes and prefixes. He was Sir Henry Dazzlem, M. P. Dazzlem used to invite dining-out wits to his table; for, the dining-out wit of the nineteenth century is the successor of the king's or baron's jester of the feudal ages, and enjoys similar privileges. Just after he was knighted he never tired of hearing himself called Sir Henry, and a town wit once called out to him from the bottom of the mahogany table:

"Sir Henry?"

"Well."

"You have now, Sir Henry, an excellent excuse for being made a baronet."

"What is that?" asked Dazzlem much flattered.

"You are already a knight."

Nobody liked the joke better than Sir Henry Dazzlem, whose imagination was always metamorphosing his knighthood into a baronetcy, and his baronetcy into a barony.

Dazzlem employed many arts to swell his consequence. His scouts brought all distinguished visitors to Doem to call upon him, as if the object of their journey had been to render him homage.

He bore himself as if he were the idol of the Doem shrine, the oracle of the Doem grove. When promising young men took high honours in the Doem university, as

a crowning honour they were introduced to Dazzlem. From his equals in the town, he received calls without returning them. After a slight of this sort, he would be at first prodigal of apologies, which became weaker and weaker, until his manner excused himself, and assumed it was all right. Great was his astonishment and resentment, when one or two eccentrically independent persons cut him for not returning their calls. Everything in Doem, indeed, seemed made for the service of Dazzlem; the garrison held the troops who protected him, the college bred his protégés, the harbour was altered to suit his ships, the bank seemed filled with his money, the prison with his poachers, trespassers, and pilferers; the parish church itself appeared to have been built to give an awful importance to his pew.

Joseph Bubble, Esquire, Fellow of the Royal Society, was perhaps the most important partner in the house of Bubble, Bill, Dazzlem, Drainem and Company. The goods in which Mr. Bubble dealt, were legally defined to be "alleged titles of no value." When a scientific analysis was made of the dealings of Bubble, it appeared that he bought nothings, sold nothings, and lent and borrowed upon the security of nothings.

Bubble was not, however, an imaginative man. He was only a man who knew how to extract gold from airy nothings, as other men wash it out of mud, or crush it out of quartz. The airy nothings even, were not his own. Solid, sparkling money without a particle more than the legal amount of alloy, was made by him out of schemes rivalling the dreams of oriental fancy. He raised money upon the deposit of the title-deeds of castles in Spain. He sold dear, the shares of mines in El Dorado: he found eager buyers for building-lots in Utopia

He pledged the ship of fools for a large sum with the Doem Bank. There was published a map in which the Doem ditch figured as a ship canal, and Bubble made money by the canal. His gains by railways were splendid. He gained gold from railways which were to whirl the inhabitants of Doem from suburb to suburb, and from the centre everywhere, subterraneously. The idea of travelling in the bowels of the earth, as if in a premature Hades, drawn by air or fire-engines, delighted many Doemians. However, those who preferred the skies were equally provided with railways running aloft upon arches above the roofs of the houses. The gold of the aëreal and of the subterranean party flowed equally into the coffers of Bubble. Direct lines upon maps were, however, his strongest plans; being based upon the mathematical axiom that the straight lines are the shortest. He seemed to have the conjuring art of converting the paper plans of junctions and of termini into bank-notes.

Bubble had a bitter hatred of busy meddling people, who minded everybody's business except their own. When it was discovered whom he meant, it was found that he denounced people who neither bought scrip, nor sold scrip; but who discussed, detected, and described, the game of scrip. Business, in his mind, meant premium snatching. When preparing reports, or answering badgering questions at meetings of stormy shareholders, there was a dogged reserve about Bubble which drove his assailants to despair. When questioned after dinner in the genial candour of private life, he would be as frank as if he were conscious rectitude in person.

"You see the scheme was not worth a rush. It was a thousand to one it did not get its bill. However, I did

not trouble myself about that. I did not know who put me on the committees, nor who were the active men, nor anything about it, and I never went near it. A number of shares were allotted to me — two or three hundred is a fair allotment to a director, or a provisional committee man. Of course, the concern was advertised everywhere, until the shares came out at a premium. I knew they would never be so high as at first, so I sold out at once. Be you sure everybody did the same. I gained two or three pounds a share, and there was an end of it. Of course, the concern was as safe and respectable, as any of them could be for returning the deposit after deducting the proper expenses."

"What, safe! not worth a rush and safe!"

"Yes, quite safe."

"What do you mean by safe?"

"I mean as safe as these things generally are."

"How safe is that?"

"Safe to return the deposits, minus the proper expenses."

"The proper expenses?"

"The preliminary expenses."

The friends of Bubble kept their town-houses and their country-houses, drove their carriages, feasted on delicacies, and clad themselves in splendid waistcoats, out of these preliminary expenses, derived from schemes not worth a rush, and yet euphoniously described as proper expenses.

"Oh!" continued Bubble, "the best names in Doem were along with mine. All did the same. Of course I knew things would be so well managed that nobody would be responsible. My name may be down for two millions — what of that? who cares? — there's nothing

like it. I scarcely knew on how many committees my name was down. I knew they were all right, and sure to return the deposits, less the small sum for expenses. Of course there could be no disgrace in it, when it included some of the first men in the country. We were all tarred with the same stick."

When Bubble soared to his culminating point, he saw the whole Doem world at his feet. Heroes who had served their fellows, by sacrificing themselves, received but a small and select homage compared with the noisy plaudits and costly testimonials bestowed on Bubble for making a colossal fortune in a few years. He was celebrated by poetry, painting and sculpture. Gracious powers! how ugly his hard, mean, secretive face looks in marble! He was a bad speaker, and had nothing to say; but Demosthenes never obtained more religious silence in public meetings: his hearers believing him to be somehow golden-mouthed, a veritable Chrysostom. They seemed trying to discover the secret of fortune-making in his bad grammar.

The Reverend Doctor Surplice always said grace wherever Bubble fed, and Sir Nathaniel Doington, the pious baronet, always quoted in Parliament the opinion of his friend — the great capitalist — on the utility of tracts for navvies who could not read.

The caricaturist's shop is sometimes the temple of truth in grotesque. There are epochs in which truth is to be seen nowhere, not even at the bottoms of wells, except in caricatures. This was the case during the Bubble-mania. The caricature of the armorial bearings of the Bubble family was the shadow going before the public reprobation which at last overtook Bubble. I do not know whether the drawing of it was finally brought

home to the sparkling wit who rivalled the sparkling wines at the dinner-table of Mr. Bubble; or to the tall, dashing silent lady with observing black eyes, who generally graced the evening parties of Mrs. Bubble. The heraldry in it was too commercial for ordinary appreciation. The Bubble business was symbolised in the Bubble arms by Stock Exchange emblems. The crest was a bull's head; gulls, ducks, and bears covered the quarterings of the shield; and a stag and a doe rampant were the supporters.

Bubble and his friends gave general currency to the word investment. The axiom that the straight line is the shortest did not serve their turn so well, in regard to railways, as did moral truths and truisms, enforcing economy and investment. The savage is the reckless, the civilised is the saving man. The man skating without heeding the thaw, is not more sure of falling into the water than the man spending all he earns is sure of falling into want. The Bubble perversion of the frugal axioms, consisted in preaching the duty of investing in their schemes: in trafficking, like many others, in light from Heaven, and using it to lead men astray. The chief end of man, according to the Bubble catechism, is to invest. According to the Bubble philosophy the moral man is the man who invests, and the immoral man is the man who does not invest. The good father is the investing father, and the good husband is the investing husband. And many worthy men were caught by their doctrines, and found soul-ease in applying them. Brave men toiled hard and saved hard, and smelted gold out of their muscles and their brains, which they invested with the Bubble brotherhood. Shrewd men were the dupes of Bubble. He had victims among men far too

sagacious to invest their savings in nothings. Prudently investing their savings in Joint Stock Companies which yielded real profits, they became sleeping-partners in concerns with equally real risks. When the risks came into play they found themselves engaged in business which they did not understand, and which they found were decidedly hazardous. They were sleeping-partners with hideous nightmares and dreadful awakenings. Many bought shares which they could not sell, and made themselves liable for calls they could not answer. Many sincerely wished they had found investing nothing worse than losing their money, or anything half so agreeable as making ducks and drakes with their savings on the sea. Investing they found was giving a thousand pounds to Bubble, and giving him also the right to threaten them with legal proceedings if they did not send him nine thousand pounds more. They had given him their savings and the power of suing them for what they could not pay. When, too late, the investors sought the advice of men who understood the business in which they were entangled, they were told they had been infatuated individuals.

When the embarrassed heads of families repeated in their domestic circles the opinions of the competent judges, it was well if the model fathers did not hear their nearest and dearest, and their own hearts, calling them "fools." They never knew the end of their liabilities; and when they imagined "they had washed their hands of them," they found the companies could still "burn their fingers." Under their trials, many good and brave men broke down. It was pitiful to see them at the meeting of the shareholders of insolvent companies, asking, as ruined men, how the money had been lost;

and it made the blood boil to hear the friends of the great firm answering nonchalantly from the platform, they were sure they could not say how it had been lost. It was more pitiful still, to listen to the examinations of these ruined men in the Bankruptcy Courts, where they appeared, as their judges declared, from no fault of their own, and only in consequence of (the phrase is finely vague) "the pressure of the times." Many of them gave confused answers out of bewildered heads. "They had grown old," they said, "and their memories were not good." They were not old in years; but, after saving thirty years, they had invested a few thousand pounds: quite recently, they were sure they were solvent, and now they knew they were in debt, and could not pay. Death gave his kindly protection to many of these men. It was then that the most pitiful thing of all was seen: the friends of the ruined families begging the wealthy members of the Bubble fraternity to give alms to prevent the orphans from starving, until they could find ways of supporting themselves.

The capital acquired by the great firm was managed by Mr. Bill. His special department was their banking business. The great company opened accounts with several banks. Hospitable to a fault, the country seat of Mr. Wyndham Bill might have been described as a rural boarding-house for the entertainment of the partners and cashiers, directors and managers, of banking companies. He made things pleasant for them on Sundays and holidays, in the country, and they made things pleasant for him on week-days in town. He could turn any paper he liked into gold. He organised a system of credit all round the globe, which consisted in the transmutation of paper into the precious metals. His paper was always

cashed, and sure to be cashed; he stood so well with his bankers. Mr. Wyndham Bill, it was said, boyishly and playfully, could always fly his kites. Mr. Wyndham Bill had an odd fancy for odd sums. His bills were always drawn for odd pounds, odd shillings, and odd pence. They wore the impress of the transactions of keen, calculating men, knowing well how farthings make pounds. Mysterious agents found everywhere for Mr. Bill, mythical persons in business who promised to pay thousands of pounds upon exactly specified days, for goods which never existed. The mysterious agents and the mythical business-men asked nothing for their pains and risks, but a small per-centage upon each pound. Mr. Wyndham Bill preferred to have on his paper the names of firms rather than the names of individuals, as looking more business-like. But, of the persons who accommodated him with thousands of pounds he knew nothing. He believed they had shops, or offices. Respecting, for instance, Kyte and Papyrus, he could not tell whether Kyte was both Kyte and Papyrus, or Papyrus both Papyrus and Kyte. Phlymsey and Hyde were certainly partners, as could be proved by their marriage certificate.

While Dazzlem gave splendour, and Bubble and Bill buoyancy, to the firm; the ballast, such as it was, Drainem supplied. Everybody who came near Drainem became, somehow or other, his orange, which he squeezed and flung away. When he was a boy at school, having an old and common knife, while another boy had just received a present of a new and rare knife, Drainem effected a barter, giving in exchange for the fine knife, his own bad knife, and an apple, upon a hot thirsty day. Strange stories were told by infatuated individuals, who had become exasperated individuals, respecting

Drainem, and silly women with money; to explain how Drainem first became a capitalist. When he first had creditors to a considerable amount, he made a composition with them, and they accepted anything he offered to keep the young man and themselves out of the clutches of the lawyers. In due course of time, he was a member of the finance committee of almost everything in Doem, which had anything to do with finance. He became a candidate for all situations which were highly paid, because they were situations of trust; and Bill, Bubble, and Dazzlem were always ready to be security for him to any amount. When little past the prime of life, he was the mightiest of the mighty in the Doem Bank. For long years the Doem Bank was deemed the very type of financial solidity. The children, when they wished to asseverate anything in Doem, said, "As sure as death," but their elders said, "As sure as the bank." There spread, however, one morning an astounding rumour, — "Mr. Drainem has run away, and taken all the money in the bank with him." The documents he had deposited, it was, however, asserted by his friends, were amply sufficient to make all right; and when the documents were examined by lynx-eyed lawyers, they were discovered to be worthless.

The great company burst. When the accounts of the bank were examined, it was found that all the members of the families of the great firm had overdrawn their accounts to the amount of millions. Moreover, it was found that the law could not lay hold of any of them. They had been much too sharp for that. The dividends of their estates were counted by farthing, in the pound. When the financial statements of the finance committees of Doem were tested by a comparison with effects, the

revelations were appalling and distressing. It was at least thought that the insolvents — to use the amiable word employed to describe them — could be expelled by the indignant probity of Doem from the Chamber of Commerce. Insolvency was in itself, by an old rule, expulsion; but the great firm had, when all-powerful, expunged the old rule long ago.

The frown of public opinion excepted, I do not know of any punishment having ever overtaken any of these men. The Briton is extremely and in many respects justly proud of his criminal jurisprudence; yet it ruins for life the outcast infant who pilfers a trifle, and gives impunity to men who bamboozle frugal families out of their all. Sir Henry Dazzlem had obtained betimes, in return for his votes in Parliament, a colonial appointment; and if I were to write to him, I dare say, I should be obliged to address him as "His Excellency." Three generations of the Bubbles and the Bills enjoy themselves wherever life is made most pleasant in Europe. Mr. Drainem lives in one of the finest hotels in the Champs Elysées at Paris, and the French find him the type of an Anglais, and call him Milor Drainem de Drainem.

I once went, after a few weeks' sojourn in an English sea-side place, over to Paris. Crawling in the sun and the sweet air, I had often remarked at the sea-side place a paralytic gentleman in a black, old-fashioned hat and cloak, which had been worn until they were a yellow brown. A physician told me who he was. "That man is a victim of Bubble, Bill, Dazzlem, Drainem, and Company. That man, sir, is honour itself. I have known him since his boyhood, — and they have made him a beggar, — a paralysed beggar." I left Honour Itself, waiting

death impatiently in an English cellar; and the first person I recognised in the Champs Elysées was Dishonour Itself. Drainem and his dames, magnificently attired, spurned the bitumen proudly, and prostrated the passer-by with their looks.

The poor paralytic gentleman was not their worst victim. I knew in his youth Beau Buttons. He was a showy young man, always showily dressed. He was honourable enough as a boy and as a youth, and had decided commercial abilities. But, he was trained to business by the great firm. He rose by his abilities to be manager of a respectable company. He was in this position when I last saw him among the congregation of a popular preacher. I had hoped he would wait near the door for me, but when I got out he had vanished.

The explanation soon appeared in the newspapers. The reports of the Central Criminal Court described a painful scene: the condemnation of a gentleman who had been highly esteemed and blindly trusted, to seven years' transportation. It was Beau Buttons. He had lived ostentatiously, and had speculated, to keep up his style of living, with thousands of pounds not his own. He had not been trained by the great firm without learning some of their arts. He might have concealed and glossed over his dishonour; but he found lying intolerable, and he made a clean breast to the chairman and the committee, and although they gave him time to escape, and forced upon him the means of escape, after surrendering everything he had, he delivered himself up at the nearest police-office. Poor Beau Buttons! The glitter on his coat was the first sign of his insolidity, but he did a solid thing when he preferred transportation to lying always! Surely, by this

last act, he tore back at least a shred of his shadow from the Grey Man.

Upon the whole, it may be said, there are few things in life which are solid and lead to a solid end; but the following maxim of wise men of old, has stood well the tear and wear of many ages: "He who has gold in his box is not rich, but he who has gold in his conscience is rich."

LITTLE CONSTANCY'S BIRTHDAY.

I look back to a time, some five-and-twenty years ago, when there came great storms and tempests — the most terrible that old people then alive recollected. I think how, for weeks together, it blew great guns in the Channel — how with every mail came news of bursting dams, of rivers swelling up suddenly, of great trees uprooted, of houses blown down, and their timbers found many fields away; of poor souls overtaken by the waters, and never heard of more: in short, of one cruel chapter of misfortune. Captains from foreign countries, making English ports with infinite risk and hardship, brought tidings that off the Dutch coast the people were up night and day, watching their dykes, and that the great French rivers had come down roaring from their mountains, sweeping the whole country quite clear. Many ships, homeward bound, and within sight of land, went down miserably with all hands, as the wreck chart of that year can testify, the coast being littered for many weeks with planks, shattered casks, and staved seamen's chests. I think over these things, and of the misery and wailing they brought with them, and they grow into a rough inclement background for this one passage in my life.

It fell out unhappily that at this particular season, of all seasons in the year, I had to cross the seas; and

of all seas in the world, the great Bay of Biscay. A failing house in Spain, long mismanagement, with other reasons, at this date of little moment, made it of absolute necessity that I should set forth with all speed upon this errand. Curiously enough, though there were then signs and tokens of coming storms, I did not so much mind going to sea for a long voyage. But there was another reason which would have made me buy off that journey at any cost, had that been possible. I had just been married — barely three weeks before — to my own cousin, Constance; as sweet a little dame as ever stood lightly upon this earth. A brown-haired, bright-eyed, blooming, and most bewitching little dame. Little Constancy she was to me, by which hangs a pretty history, of stern and cruel relations, of secret engagement, of journeying to the Indies and long absence, of letters miscarrying, of her being wearily importuned to give up this exile who had now given her up, and choose from a band of willing worshippers, all ardently beseeching her. Which pretty history finishes off with her holding out to the very last, like a brave Little Constancy as she was; and with the good ship *Dear Delight*, having some one long expected on board, being signalled off the Downs — with joining of hands and happy wind-up, and with many more things besides, usually of small interest to any, beyond the parties themselves. This, however, was why she was called my Little Constancy, and made it seem hard that we should be so soon put asunder again.

It was of no use repining, for to stay, as I have said, was only the next door to ruin. So I made ready for the voyage with sham spirits for poor Little Constancy's sake, finding proper comfort in the well-worn saw intro-

duced on such occasions. And upon the fourteenth day of December, at two in the morning, I went on board of that magnificent fast-sailing line of packet ship, Albatross, fifteen hundred tons burden, standing A 1 at Lloyd's, and then lying off Gravesend.

As to the voyage out, and its incidents, I will say nothing beyond this; that if the sailing of that magnificent first-class line of packet ship had been purposely delayed with the view of meeting those great gales before mentioned, it could not have been more nicely contrived; for, within twenty hours after losing sight of land, the waves began to swell, and the wind to blow from the south. For seven days and seven nights we lay in a trough, as it were, enduring a weary round of staving in of bulwarks, and washing of men overboard; of lashing to the masts, and of other miserable shipwreck incidents. I did not dream, when taken in early youth to hear a famous nautical performer chaunt, "How we lay, on that day, in the Bay of Biscay, O!" that I should myself come one day to realise the horrors of that mariner's situation. On the morning of the eighth day we got sight of the Spanish coast, and within six hours the magnificent fast-sailing line of packet ship was towed in, an inglorious show, with two masts cut away, and all hands at the pumps to keep her from foundering.

As soon as I had gathered a little strength after the hardships of the voyage, I turned to righting the affairs of our house, which were even in worse condition than they had been described. There was a curious feebleness over me, which I could not at all account for; but I put my shoulder to the work, and soon got things into shape; and then began to think of setting out on my

journey home; but not by way of the ocean, as may be well conceived. Of such rough travelling I had had more than sufficient, and even then no vessel durst put out to sea; therefore, I made up my mind to take the road across the mountains, down through the French country, and in this manner get back to home and Little Constancy. Therefore, though I felt at times a sort of feverish ague closing its fingers on me, together with a heavy sickness about my heart, I was ready by the third evening to set out. I travelled all through that night, and the best portion of the next day, thinking how five days more would find me at-home, with ample time to spare, before the coming of little Constancy's birthday, the last day in the year. Struggling hard to put away from me those closing, creeping fingers; when towards nightfall, my head began to swim round, and the fingers to take fast hold, and I felt that I must give in at last. Now, at a lonely posting village, called Laon or Lacon, or some such name, just past the French frontier, the bitter truth was at last forced upon me, that I could go no farther; so I was helped up into the lonely inn of the lonely place, through a little crowd of rude, heavy peasants, up into a cold dismal cell, with a brick floor. Through a dewy film, fast gathering on my eyes, was visible the landlord's full-moon face, gloating, ogre-like, over the prey dropped at his door. The ogre would feast upon me yet, and worse than all, keep me there in duress for ages. More wretched than ever I had felt before in my life, I gave myself up unresisting to the gripe of the ague fingers, and was soon wandering, lost in the hot clouds of fever-land. That first night in the lonely inn was a night of terrors and horrid shapes, familiars of intermittent fever just then beginning

its work. I was drowning — beaten under — swallowed up in great green waves, over and over again. There was the old roar of waters in my ears, and I would wake up gasping, only to find myself tossing in those other fiery, linen waves. At the dead of the night, even as the poor soldier in the song, “A sweet vision I saw, And thrice ere the morning I dreamt it again.” Not thrice only, but many times, were those boiling waters parted, and a bright green spot, where the sun was shining, and Little Constancy walking — looking out anxiously for one, under pledge to return home by her birth-day, displayed to my poor eyes. Struggling, panting to reach that spot, which looked like Paradise, I would be drawn back again, and would waken up with a cry of despair.

When daylight broke, it showed me a crowd of stupid, staring faces; — the great saucer-eyed landlord, an ogre by daylight; his wife, saucer-eyed too; and a creature white-aproned, with a basin and towel, whose office I divined instinctively. I motioned him away distractedly, adjuring him with wild gestures to begone. I would not be quacked to death, I shrieked, by their barber-surgeons. The round, stupid faces looked on one another, the negro lips muttered some jargon, and I heard the sabots clatter as they closed in round me. The wretch with the bowl had something glittering between his teeth, plainly bent upon his bloody work. He was advancing on me, and all hope seemed gone, when the sabots shuffled and scraped once more, and the heavy, lumbering figures opened a passage for some one to approach. A figure in black, an angel from Heaven, it seemed to me, glided up softly to the bedside, took my hot hand in his, and spoke words in a

low voice that filled me with comfort. Most sweet and soothing apparition was it, the gentle ecclesiastic of the village, who had heard of the stranger that lay sick up at the inn. I pointed feebly to the man with the bowl and instrument, who I felt was still thirsting for blood. I was understood, and a few words sent the staring crowd clattering and shuffling from the room, down the sanded stairs, into the street.

A dark-robed being remained, whom I watched curiously for hours after, moving softly round the room, and bending over something on the fire. It at once took possession of me that this must be a leech: one of the mysterious men read of in old books, who dealt in specifics, and electuaries, and healing draughts. Perhaps he had about him an elixir of strange potency; and, when the dark-robed figure bending down low over the fire, took something off and drew near to the bed with a glass goblet filled with a portion, I looked anxiously to see him take from his breast that red purse containing an amulet, which was to be steeped many minutes in the efficacious draught. Thence came deep sleep, and sudden awakening, late at night, together with a sense of refreshment, and weary load removed.

Within four days from that date I was getting up well-nigh restored; being brought through by the kind thought and skill of my village curé. He had a good knowledge of simples, that gentle priest, which served him quite as well as the hakim's purse and amulet; and, better still, had kept the door fast against the accredited practitioner, who had come, importunately, many times over. I was so restored, indeed, that we came to talking of my setting out within a day or so. Very pleasant was it to think of those great fever-waves, now wholly

subsided; and of the smooth table-land where Little Constancy had been seen to walk; and of that dear birthday to which I had been looking, — now at last attainable, and within certain hope. Pleasant, too, even that laying out the route speculatively, with the good curé's help. How I was to post it expeditiously to Toulouse; how I was to lie there one night, and then take the heavy diligence straight up to Paris; which, it was certain, had once more commenced its runnings, the roads having been hastily got into repair. From Toulouse to Paris, then, in a heavy diligence; on from Paris in a heavy diligence again; Calais then; Dover then — Ship hotel; the Lightning, four-horse coach; London; Little Constancy and birth-day fireside. Thus we laid it out; when, suddenly, for the first time, I bethought me of a certain leather pocket-book, securely fastened up in one of those courier bags travellers carry. It was gone. It was not in the outside pocket under the flap, nor in the inside pocket; nor in great-coat, nor in any place of security that I possessed. I was aghast. On that leathern case, hung all the elements of the vista I had contemplated, — heavy diligence, Ship hotel, fast Lightning coach, and Little Constancy herself. With trembling fingers I rushed to my keys, and delved down distractedly in the undermost layers of my valise, turning all out in a great heap upon the floor. It was of no avail; the leathern pocket-book was gone utterly: stolen, most likely, by those stupid, staring boors, that crowded round when I was helped in, faint, and nearly unconscious. To this opinion the good curé would by no means incline; holding that, though stupid, heavy natures, the men of those parts were true and honest, full of a pastoral simplicity; that you might leave a

purse upon the highway, and not have it taken up; that, in short, it was far more likely I had dropped it on the mountains. The cruel mischance, to whatever cause owing, had dashed down all my hopes and pleasant dreaming, levelling them pitilessly like so many card-houses. I was to be bound to this wretched place for another week at least, having to wait advices from Paris, with a fresh supply of money.

I suppose that, at a rough estimate, that posting-village might include some ten or twelve cottages, disposed impartially, so as to form a street. The inn, which was at the sign of the Golden Monkey, was the post-house — or, perhaps the post-house was the inn. For the post element had entered into being long before the entertaining business. Beyond the little street, the village dispersed itself, and broke up into scattered farm-houses, speckling over the valley at long intervals. But everything had a bleared and stripped aspect; for, at the back, rose the mountains of a blue shivering tint, down which swept eternally cutting blasts, the line of whose action lay through our street longitudinally, so that all objects in its walk were being stripped and blighted ceaselessly. From these causes the Golden Monkey himself — once rampant over the door — had long since become a mere tabula rasa, or plain void, every inch of his gold and brilliance being scraped from him by the rough mountain powers. So, too, had been dealt with the walls whereon the Golden Monkey had leant him, exhibiting patches and bare places, like the back of an outlawed dog. So, too, the farm-house roofs had been dealt with, which were always having new tiles set in to replace old ones borne through the air to adjoining parishes. So, too, the boors' faces had been dealt with —

men, women, and children boors being peeled and charred by this same mountain blast. It made me collapse when I would first go forth into the street, piercing me through, like a sharp sword. Such of the trees, as had escaped blowing to the ground long since, had the same blasted look. Altogether, considering that it had pretty much this aspect all through, summer and winter — the blue mountains keeping off the sun in summer, and proving good nurseries for sharp gusts and drenching rains in winter — it was about as comfortless a spot as a miserable soul could desire for itself. There was not in the wide world a valley so bleak. I chafed sorely during the days I waited for the letters; keeping upon one eternal beat, between the Golden Monkey and another building, the post for letters, Gendarmerie and Douane, all in one. For the high offices of police-director, chief of the customs, and postmaster-general of the district, are here all heaped upon the shoulders of one little old man — Barbou, by name — Monsieur le Chef, Monsieur le Directeur de la Chambre de Commerce, and the rest of it. Barbou was a little old man, with twinkling carbuncle eyes, nut-cracker nose and chin; always to be seen in a little black skull-cap, and ancient flowered dressing-gown; which, as Barbou loved to set forth wearily, had been in Egypt, Spain, Russia, and other countries, in service of the Grand Army, and of the Grand Man. He had served — my faith, yes! — had served, and seen some bloody fields, had Barbou; witness that of Friedland, where his shako had been bored through with a musket-ball. Grand cross, Legion of Honour, from the hand of the Grand Man himself! Did I note anything remarkable about his face? A likeness, say, to any personage, eh? Well, he was often held to resemble, mar-

vellously, one of the Grand Man's family. Once — and here Monsieur Barbou's voice would fall into a sort of huskiness, — once had the Grand Man, when coming down the ranks, in the redingote and cocked-hat, stopped full before him, frowning hard, and taking many pinches of snuff. The Grand Homme did not wish any one to be like him. People now alive had often spoken of him in connection with his Majesty the King of Westphalia. Eh? Well, well! those days were all gone by for him.

This history was usually being rehearsed when the form of looking through some half-dozen or so old yellow letters — that have lain there dozens of years — was being proceeded with. I came upon the beat once, twice, and three times in the day: indeed, as often as I heard the sound of car or cart-wheel; each time feeling certain that there could be no letters; that if there were, it would be in suspension of all physical laws; and yet I went upon that beat perseveringly and insanely, finding in it a sort of relief and alleviation. There came the same little drama every time — the black skull-cap and flowery dressing-gown, as before; the episode from the great wars, as before; likeness and cast of features, as before; Grand Homme, as before. Then the old inquiry and old visiting of a decayed pigeon-hole, and bringing out of the faded yellow bundle; careful deciphering of the inscriptions seriatim, with gathering of them up again, and regrets that Monsieur's packet had not arrived. Would come by next mail, he was sure. Which tedious little act was played out with such shrugging, and bows, and smiles, that I could not but take my part in it patiently, and minister to the old Brave's weakness. For who was there in that place beyond myself to come to the Bureau and ask for expected letters?

Six, seven, and eight days, and no Paris despatch. I began to grow desperate. I was eating my heart up, and dashing myself against the bars of an iron cage, pining for deliverance. I began to loathe every man, woman, and child, and twig, about the place. It was now grown quite a blank solitude; for even my good curé had left, and was gone one of his rounds. Of nights, strange and horrible roarings could be heard up the mountains, results of sharp blasts sweeping across hollows, which might have been taken for goblins playing at ghostly nine-pins. I might as well have been upon a desert island, like Crusoe and other shipwrecked men, and was gloomily figuring to myself how I, too, might set up a post, with the date of my coming marked, and set to at once notching it with a penknife for the days. There were signs, also, that, up the blue mountains, more terrible storms were gathering, and indistinct rumour had reached the village of a river having swelled up suddenly many miles away, and of consequent wreck and desolation.

One Sunday evening, when I was leaning on my hands looking out at the cold blueness over the mountains, and thinking it was like enough that I should go melancholy mad, there suddenly appeared at the door a little man, in a blue frock and brass-bound sabots, and a red comforter about his neck. He stood staring in the door-way, rolling his eye stupidly, much as all his brethren had the habit of doing, but without attempting to speak.

"Well!" said I, turning away gloomily from the cold blue, "well, friend, what is it?"

He was Jacquot, he said.

Well, what could be done for Jacquot?

"Nothing. Only he had come down from Barbou's, who had called him in as he was passing, and given him a sou, and bade him run quickly, tell the Monsieur who was staying at the Golden Monkey — "tell him," said the little man, beginning to count on his fingers, "firstly, that a packet had just arrived, and that —"

I started up — it had come at last — "Where! when!" I said, "quick — give it me!"

"And," said Jacquot, still at his fingers, "secondly, I was to tell Monsieur —" I must at this moment have sprung at Jacquot; for that little man took from his breast a small parcel, and disappeared instantly.

I opened it with trembling fingers, by the light of the fire, and out of the cover there dropped two letters; one with the Paris postmark — plainly from the banker there with supplies; the other English, but not from Little Constancy. Most curious this; for write, write, had been our last words, solemnly covenanted and sworn. Not from Little Constancy, but from my English man of business, and dated two days before:

"Dear Sir," said the letter, "Not having received advice of my last communication, I feel I should be wanting in duty if I did not urge your immediate return. I will not conceal from you that the physician pronounces Mrs. Sherburne's case to be almost hopeless. At twelve o'clock this day there was a slight change for the better; but such fluctuations, as I am advised, are but imperfect indices of restoration. Your presence would be of much profit, as much I fear of Mrs. Sherburne's illness must be set down to an untrue rumour of the ship's being lost. Direct to Paris. Care of Messrs. Fauchon & Cie. Trusting that by this time you will be so far on your road home. Remain, dear sir, yours, &c."

A cruel, crushing, undreamt of blow for the lonely traveller bending over the fire in the bleak inn, — not too bleak, however, — fittest place for him and in excellent keeping. My heart seemed to have withered up

suddenly. I felt a craving to go forth to get lost in that cold blue mist up the mountains, and be never heard of more. For my pearl of great price, my Little Constancy, was gone, — taken from me.

No! not yet, thank Heaven! and my eyes fell upon that other letter lying across the fender. Money could do much: speed could do much: stern will and action could do much to shorten the road. Action, then, with desperate purpose. That seasonable packet would bear me over mountains, and river, and ocean, and hundred obstacles. With which war-cry, as it were, of Action! — Action! ringing in my ears, I was in an instant hurrying down to Barbou's. I told him my case in a few hasty words. He entered into it at once, like a true soldier of the empire. All his old tricks, his bows and shrugs, his flowered dressing-gown, he put from him in an instant. He, too, had the war-cry — Action!

"No time to lose," said he, "I am proud to help a bold man and brave husband. Give me two minutes to think, without a word."

During those two minutes he looked into a little book many times, and wrote certain figures; then, tapping his forehead, said, "Je le tiens. I have it. Listen!"

If we can meet the great diligence which passes by Bordeaux at three o'clock in the morning, all is saved. Forty miles before midnight, will do it. One hour for sleep, if you can, and two hours more in the malle-poste; but it must be headlong speed — ventre à terre the whole way. Had I made up my mind to that?

"To anything," I said, "but that first fifty miles, how shall I cover *them*?"

"Have no fears," said M. Barbou, "you know Jacquot? Well, Jacquot's father has a fleet mare that will run till

she drops — a noble beast, also a light market-cart. Jacquot's father will let you have his market-cart, and drive you himself, if I ask it. He will land you at Saint Marsan before midnight, I lay my life on it."

Within ten minutes from that time the fleet mare and light cart were at the door of the Golden Monkey, and I was shaking M. Barbou by the hand. The boors were standing about, staring stupidly, as only came natural to them. Then, with hearty bon voyage, chorussed by Monsieur Barbou, the landlord, and little Jacquot, and with one last stare of bewilderment from the boors, the fast mare was given her head, and shot away clear of the little street like a flash of fire.

It might have been then close upon six o'clock of the darkest night I had known there; and, as the last light from the village disappeared in the distance, the fleet mare turned sharply aside from the high road and became lost in rough, unpaved, country cross-roads, which Jacquot's father knew by heart. He had no words to throw away. Gradually the fleet mare warmed to the work, and seemed at last to fly rather than run; taking us at one even pace up steep hills and down steep hills; along clay roads and lanes where roads had never been; down gullies, across trenches and rushing brooks; through mist and fog. Only at times, when sweeping round a corner, the fleet mare and light cart would reel unsteadily, soon, however, to right themselves again. By-and-by, on the other side of a thick wood, I caught sounds of low roarings, as from wild beasts. "Inundation," said Jacquot's father curtly, turning the fleet mare's head towards the right; of which disaster we presently met further tokens in the shape of a great flood crossing the road, causing the mare to stop short,

rearing on her haunches. But Jacquot's father, with wild yells and imprecations, fell to lashing the fleet mare's flanks, bending over and working at the head-reins like one possessed, and so forced her, kicking and splashing through the great flood. Once, also, the light cart was tilted up on a big stone, and was toppling over, when Jacquot's father sprang across me, and the next instant was hanging at the mare's head.

At last, towards a quarter past eleven, after five hours or so of this headlong speed, Jacquot's father pointed with his whip to a dim light upon a hill. I began to find my heart lightening wonderfully. British home and Little Constancy did not seem hopeless after all; for yonder is Saint Marsan, that other posting village which the fleet mare was bound to reach before midnight.

The fleet mare had done her task; and by this time, no doubt, the malle-poste was drawn up at the door, waiting to change horses, and bear me forward. Suddenly a voice called to us out of the darkness, seeking to know if we are going on beyond the village, for that the river had swelled up the night before, burst its banks, doing grievous damage, and carrying away the new bridge, scarcely leaving a pier standing, so that we had only to turn back by the way we came. Another crushing blow. If it had been some unholy errand, I might have taken these as so many signs that Heaven was against me and my work.

"What are you about?" I said, catching desperately at the reins, for the stupid boor was already turning his beast about. "Drive forward."

"But the bridge?"

En avant! Within ten minutes more the hoofs of the

fleet mare began to clatter on the pavement, and we were in the little posting town. But all in darkness except at the lower end, where there were torches moving about, and where all the inhabitants seemed to have collected. There were round us in an instant excited men, all talking together, with the torches flaring in the eyes of the fleet mare, and making her rear and plunge. Were the engineers come at last? When were they coming? There was not so much danger now, for the flood was beginning to fall. That giving way of the bridges, had saved them.

"But the malle-poste?" I asked.

"Just arrived, but could go no further that night. To-morrow evening, when the boats were got up, and the bridge repaired, just temporarily — perhaps to-morrow night I might be set across."

"Was there no drive round? No other bridge up or down? — no matter how much out of the way."

"Yes, there was the wooden bridge some eight miles higher, but Monsieur must see what little chance it has when the great Saint Marsan bridge, quite new, and built of stone at enormous cost, had given way."

"No boat?"

"No boat: all dashed to pieces in the flood, it had come so suddenly."

It was all over then. It was no use struggling with Destiny; and with a sort of heart-sick resolve of doing something — no matter what — I jumped to the ground, and made my way through the crowd and flaring torches to the river's edge. It went roaring by, a white, swollen sheet of foam; a great broad river utterly impassable. I could see the jagged masonry where the new bridge had been rent away. It was utterly hopeless, and I

turned back from the edge filled with despair, not caring what might become of me. I suppose as much could be gathered from my face; for they made way for me respectfully, and whispered together. Perhaps Jacquot's father had unfolded to them my little history, and the object of my journey; for I had remarked him earnest in conversation with certain of the crowd, gesticulating in a manner foreign to his nature, and pointing now to the road behind, now across the river. At all events, an old man in a blouse made his way to me, and, touching his hat, asked if Monsieur was resolved to go forward that night, at all hazards. In the face of all risks, I said, nervously — why did he ask? Simply because, some six miles or so off, there was a ferry — used to be, that is, for it had been given up since the new bridge — with a boat drawn up under a shed. It had escaped, most likely. There the river was narrower, and for a good sack of money old Clou the ferryman might take me across.

From behind the torches voices of encouragement. "Aye! the very thing! Old Clou will take Monsieur, but he must have gold; and the Tigresse — Monsieur must not mind them if they swear and spit at him at first — let him clink the gold toujours! Let Monsieur be sure to take a couple of shovels!"

"Did he know the way?"

Jacquot's father did; confessing, with a stupid bewilderment, that thought of Clou had never entered his head.

"Come along," he said, in his droning tone. A short respite at the inn for administering to the fleet mare a certain mash compounded by Jacquot's father's own hand; and we were off. Drawing new life and vigour from the cunning mash, the fleet mare started afresh by

a flank road overhanging the river's side the whole way. All along that road we could hear the stream surging and roaring below, striving, as it were, with the fleet mare who should reach the ferry-house first; through a thick jungle most of the way; through mud and stones, knee-deep, the whole way; through sluices where the road had given and been washed down into the river, where a scoop had been bitten out as it were, where Jacquot's father had to get down and carefully lead round the fleet mare; through places where the bank had fallen in a great heap and completely stopped the road, forcing us to work wearily with the two shovels so thoughtfully supplied to us. At length the road began to slope steadily to the river's edge, the trees to crowd more thickly, and the fleet mare to slacken her pace, when, through a dense net-work of branches — a crowded tree-rigging, as it were — stood out the shape of a heavy log-tower, quite square, and hanging over to one side, with a strange tumble-down effect. Light, air, and the view of heaven were shut out by the choking tangle of trees and rank vegetation that wound round and round again that log-house; while, within reach of our hand, we could hear the flood tumbling by, like an avalanche.

Jacquot's father got down and got through the branches to the door with much toil. It had been painted red, and still preserved a dull, smurched tint of that colour. Many of the logs gaped, and the huge upper storeys hung over the lower like scowling eyebrows. It overhung the river a little, on a sort of stone pier; and, at one side, was a decayed shed, with the roof stripped off; where, no doubt, lay the ferry-boat. Altogether, a stagnant, unwholesome, heart-crushing place.

Jacquot's father took a heavy stone and banged at the door, long and loud; but without any avail. I took up another stone and hammered with him; then, stepping back, looked up through the tree-rigging at the house. A flash of light came suddenly through a high chink, and there were sounds of bolts undoing. Said a voice high up — and a voice of snarling, miawling tone, such as comes from a cat gathered up in a corner with arched back and flashing eyes — “Get away! Get you gone, robbers! I have boiling water here, and boiling pitch, of which you shall have mouthfuls, if you are not gone in two seconds.”

“It is the Tigresse,” said Jacquot's father, in a low voice, “let us go, as she bids us.”

“Are you gone?” croaked another voice, in a feeble cackle, from behind the first. “We have guns up here, we have — Ki-ki! — and the pitch! by the lord! and the dog, Ki-Ki! At them! tear them! down to them, sweet fellow!”

Then came a deep, solemn growl, and sounds of tramping down steps. They were coming, it was plain.

“Speak to them, Monsieur, quickly,” said Jacquot's father, trembling.

“We are travellers,” I said, in a loud voice, “and wish to be taken across the river.”

First voice hooted devilishly — it was laughter!

“Ki-Ki, Clou! let him down, sweet soul!”

“But you shall have money — gold.”

“Gold? Then, stop! Ki-Ki! Hold him! The monsieur will pay.”

The bolt suddenly shot back, and a great white dog, shaggy as a mountain pony, and with two red-hot coals for eyes, bounded out with a spring like a flash of light.

Behind him, with another spring, came a strange white-haired object, which, casting a horn-lantern behind it, flew at the throat of the white dog, and, winding its arms round it, threw it over, and finally dragged it in again. Then taking up her lantern — for it looked most like a woman having an old blue blanket round her — she stood in the doorway confronting us. “Now,” she said, “what of that gold?”

She was a horrid apparition. No teeth; no skin, only creased leather; no arms, only fleshless bones. On her head, an old fur cap.

“Now,” she said again, “what about the gold?”

I chinked it musically in its purse.

“Come in,” she said, “and speak to Clou.”

A ladder, and another horrid object at the top, holding a light — a horrid object, with nose and chin sharply crooked, like a parrot's bill, and one eye beaten in; dwarfish too in figure, and full of an elfish activity. This was the Old Wolf.

“Why do you let them in, Ki-ki?” he said, dancing at the top of the ladder. “They can't come up; you know they can't. I won't let them up. I won't.”

“Stand away, Clou, or be brained with this key. I spit at you.”

“Ahr-rr-r! Would you, Tigresse? I'll claw your heart out.”

“Cr-r-r-r! You one-eyed imp, where's your throat?” she said, now at the top of the ladder, and pushing him back. “Here is a monsieur come with gold, and are we not to take him in?”

By the light of the lantern she was leering horribly. For a moment I turned to go down and leave the spot;

but I thought of the end and object of my journey, and stayed.

The Old Wolf was growling to himself in a corner. We were still at the top of the ladder.

"Will you take them over?" said the Tigresse.

"No, no," snarled the Wolf. "Let them go. Ah-r-r!"

The Tigresse bounded at him, and I saw her long claws scraping his throat. He gnawed and shrieked, then got free, and grovelled.

"There!" said the Tigresse, putting back her grizzled hair, "you will get as much every minute if you cross me. Open the window, and look out at the river."

He did as he was bidden, cursing her; and we saw the black river below rushing on in a desperate race.

"Good," said the Tigresse, "it is slackening, we will take you over in an hour's time. Wait in here, there is a fire."

"Hoo hoo," whined the Old Wolf, crawling on all fours to the door. "Not in here; not as yet: you know why, don't you?"

"Pig-brained! not done of that yet! Let me see." She entered with the lantern, snatching up a cloth, and we heard sounds of rubbing. "Now come in; sit by the fire, and don't heed dotard Clou — the Old Wolf, they call him. Why, he has no teeth."

"But I can draw blood for all that," he said with a grin.

She gave a glare from her cat's eyes, and screaming to him, "Go out! You shan't stay to chatter here!" dragged him away.

There was a rude stool — the only seat in the place — against the wall, which I drew over to the fire, and then sat down. There were a few logs in the corner,

which I took and threw on the fire. Jacquot's father, however, would not come near it; but kept roaming round the room like a panther in his den, muttering to himself uneasily concerning his mare. How she would break loose and be lost in the forest, or else be carried away by robbers; all in a sort of whining grumble, common, as I have before noted, to the boors of his own region. So at last I told him he might go down and look after her himself. He departed hastily, leaving me alone over the fire. No sign of the Old Wolf or the Tigresse, whom I heard at odd intervals wrangling shrilly.

I was very weary and tired, and kept stirring the logs and looking about the room to keep myself awake. The log-room itself might have been the upper chamber of an old wooden light-house; for the sides slanted in straight up to the roof, or to the black void which might be the roof, gallery, lantern, anything. The sides were plain undressed logs of an old red wood, bolted together very rudely, like the interior of an old Dutch windmill, its axle of melancholy creak at rest for the night, up in the bleak void. Two or three cabin windows, high up and beyond reach, cut in the log walls with heavy outside shutters slapped to at every gust. A great seaman's chest with a large lid stood in the corner. Logs of wood were heaped up all about. Logs for the fire by themselves, in a high black heap in another corner. An open trap in the floor, through which we had come up into the room, with two blocks and pulleys fixed high up in the wall.

Eyes beginning to grow heavy: fire beginning to burn up with a gentle glow, terribly provocative of sleep, at the same time jerking strange shadows in spasms on the

red walls of the old Dutch mill — of the Ferry-house, I mean — Grindoff the miller, and his Men. Eye-lids drooping wearily, for, “When the wind blows, Then the mill goes, and our hearts are all blythe and merry,” and Grindoff the miller, the Old Wolf — I mean Royal Adelphi Theatre — and his Men, filing across; each with a white sack on his back, over the bridge, up the slope, up the ladder into the mill, all into the mill, — “when the wind blows!” with Count Frederick, Friederich Friburg in green Hussar jacket and Hessians, who has lost his way, and the funny serving man, who has lost his way, too; both now nodding drowsily over the fire in the mill. Now, supposing that person Grindoff, the miller; what can he have those little bulk-heads and hooks for? To swing up his sacks when the mill goes! To swing up Count Friederich and the funny serving man, coming on them from behind as they sleep. Soft music. What if he, Grindoff, should come up the trap in listen-shoes, and should steal behind me as I sleep, and take something from beneath his miller’s frock, and suddenly dispatch me; then lift the trap. Or, if he set his mill agoing to its own melancholy creaking music, and trust it — the body — behind the mill-stones to be ground up and crunched. Horrible!

Eye-lids drooping yet more wearily; logs glowing fiercely; forked shadows leaping spasmodically as before. Setting aside Grindoff for a moment, I inclined to believe that the wicked old parents of the Fatal Curiosity must have lived here up in this grim Dutch mill.

Looking out from the rude cabin windows it seems to me that it has suddenly grown to be the evening of a long day’s travel, and that afar off at the head of the pass I can see the two figures toiling along. The young

man looks back: he has on a scarlet foraging cap with a blue military cloak.

"Courage, friend," he calls to the grey sergeant, lagging a little behind him; "we shall soon be home;" and he sings —

Home to the mountain chalet,
By the river, on the river;
Where golden-haired Mary is spinning,
Where golden-haired Mary is singing,
By the river, on the river.

And as they both turn round a rock, the darkness of evening seems to gather fast, and the lines and colouring of the great Salvator crags quiver unsteadily; fading off eventually into the red logs of the old Ferry-house, with the fire flickering up as before, the forked shapes dancing galvanically as before, and I myself sitting before the fire with my head sunk down upon my chest.

It was curious how I had come by that notion of the young man and the grey sergeant. Most likely it was Barbou and his wars of the empire which had first set it a-going, bringing with it floating notions of the old guard and grand army, and furlough: all jumbled together during that long night's travel. But the young man in the scarlet foraging cap, chanting with such light heart of his golden-haired Marie, far away in some sunny country where are no rough blasts and horrid gorges. Whence had I gotten him? Somewhere on the road; perhaps a stage or so from Moulines, and they were the sweetest notes I ever heard. The Reverend Tristram Sterne looking from his chaise windows, said so once. Sentimental journey that is — dozing again for a certainty — I should keep awake. He might have been journeying home from the great wars in Algeria, having run many risks and passed through every hardship; he might have come across the sea, struggling

with terrible storms and tempest, striving to get home with all speed to that green spot where Little Constancy, long expecting and sitting up of nights, would be waiting wearily. Bound up solemnly to be back against a great festival day; and so from the high cabin window I look out for him again and for the grey sergeant. Making him out at length, still speeding on, but without the grey sergeant, who will come later. Still he sings —

Home to the mountain chalet,

By the river, on the river, &c.

And then he turns aside into a path through a thick jungle, seemingly along a river-bank, for I can catch the roar of waters hard by; altogether I should know something of that way — a tree here and rock there, having something familiar in the look. I must have come by that road once, and that, not long since, which becomes positive. Certainly, as the road widens apace, and the jungle thickens, and the roar comes nearer, a little to one side comes into view a dark mass. The old log Ferry house, it must be, where he halts and knocks, for he is very weary, and would fain rest until the grey sergeant should come up. The door closes behind him and I see him no more.

No more, that is, until looking round the log-cabin, at the heap in the corner, at the great sea-chest, and at those curious blocks and pullies up high, and at the trap (or what looks like a trap) opening, just under them, I begin to speculate what they can have done with him. Blocks, pullies, and trap-opening in conjunction. Suggestive of cruel extremity for the young soldier, alone, and the prey of Clou and the Tigresse. If, now, there was a rope reefed through the pulley, and the trap lifted, then it might be swung down lightly to the river

below, and so be swept away, and never heard of more; and the spoils — the Algerian money won by hard fighting, the scarlet foraging-cap, the blue cloak with its fur, — they might have been put by hastily, and be lying, at this instant, in the great sea-chest.

Either the door slammed or a log fell from the fire, for I started suddenly, and the red walls of the log-cabin were again quivering indistinctly under spasmodic light that came down the fire as before, settling down in steady shape and substance. Block and pullies as before, trap as before, cabin-windows as before, great sea-chest — No, the great sea-chest is not as before; for, as I can make it out in its dark corner, the lid is raised, and there is a dark and dwarfish figure stooping over and half buried in it. Clou it must be; for I could hear him muttering strange oaths, his head being still deep in the chest. Presently there was a step behind me and the Tigresse came creeping over the floor, lifting her feet stealthily, like a cat. Coming behind him she took hold of his collar with her claws, drew him back out of the chest. Then their two horrid faces came close together, lit up by sudden flashes of the fire, leering distrustfully at me. Then they whispered and snarled, and showed their teeth at one another, and the Tigresse took from under her arm something rolled up, which they spread out between them — something that looked like a large blue cloak of many folds, bordered with fur. This was laid down carefully in the sea-chest, and they both crept away to the door.

I rubbed my eyes. What can this mean? I must have been dreaming. Something whispered it was plainly time to be gone from that place, for I seemed to be standing within the shadow of some unholy deed. Had

I been dreaming, and had that groping of Clou and the Tigresse, deep in the sea-chest, been nothing more than so much ghostly dozing set afloat by objects about me? Likely enough; and yet something terribly real in that spreading out by the Tigresse of what looked so like a blue cloak of many folds, bordered with fur! It did not look like a dream; it were best surely to be gone. The wind was going down, and I could hear the sharp neighing of the fleet mare below, as she was being walked about to keep her from being chilled. One look into the great sea-chest would resolve all doubts. I rose from the rude stool and lifted the lid softly. I could see nothing, that corner was so dark; but exploring it cautiously with my hands, it appeared to be filled up with old sacks. Miller and his men over again. Turning up the sacks hurriedly, and delving to the very bottom, my fingers came upon a bundle that felt like soft cloth. Unrolling it with feverish haste, and holding it to the fire-light, it proved to be indeed a blue cloak, richly bordered with fur, and a bright scarlet foraging-cap wrapped up among its folds!

* * * *

The Tigresse was standing over me as I leant towards the fire.

"Ah!" she shrieked, "you are spying on us! Here, Clou, Clou — quick! Come up quick!"

I heard him stumbling on the ladder-steps, and rushed to the door. But she kept clawing before me, with one hand behind, whining all the while with rage.

"So you would look into the chest — look into the chest! Yine! yine! Quick, Clou!"

"What is it, sweet Tigresse?" said he, his horrid head now on a level with the door.

"He has been at our chest. Yine!" she snarled, "He must not go!"

"No, no?" said Clou, crawling round me on the floor. He had drawn something out of his breast — something that glittered.

With a spring I was at the cabin-window, and threw it open, about to call to Jacquot's father, when suddenly there came from below a steady voice, calling. They stopped and listened.

"What is it, Tigresse?" said Clou, putting back what had been glittering.

"Good people," the voice said; "good people, have you seen anyone go by this night? A young man, that is?"

"Ah-r-r-r!" muttered Clou.

"Go down to him, Clou," the Tigresse said, in a low voice. "Send him away. Let the dog upon him if he does not go."

"Aye!" said Clou, going down the ladder. "Wait, he shall help you to take care of him yonder. Hop-hop! come up, beauty! come up, sweet child!"

And the white brute came scrambling up the ladder.

"Now, stir or speak," said the Tigresse, catching him round the throat, "and the sweet one shall lap up your blood — she is thirsty to-night."

"Good people," the voice came again, "don't keep an old soldier waiting."

* * * * *

"He is gone," said Clou, coming up the ladder again, "gone on to the town, where he will find his friend, no doubt, and what shall we do with him —?"

"Mordieu! what do we wait for?" said another figure, climbing the ladder behind him — Jacquot's father.

"The flood is gone down a good bit, and the wind does not blow — why do we not cross, I say?"

They looked at us a moment, then the Tigresse whispered Clou a moment.

"There is sense in that," he said at length. "Why should we not go? Let us take the gentlemen across at once."

They descended, we following. I did not know what to think; but, at all events, was glad to be free from that horrid place.

We came out into the open air upon a sort of little stage or pier. An old rusty chain ran across, by which we were to be drawn over.

"It is very old," said Clou, looking at it, "and it creaks;" here he grinned. "Pay the Tigresse now, before we go."

It was a broad flat-bottomed boat, very crazy and decayed. We got the fleet mare on board with difficulty, and set off, leaving the Tigresse on the pier looking after us.

Though the waters had gone down considerably, it was still a desperate task to get the boat across. We had all to hold on and work at the chain, while the boat reeled and swung round, and was every instant on the point of being carried away. But we got across at last, and were set on shore safely at the other side.

We were settled in the light cart once more, and the fleet mare bounded away full of life and spirit. Just then we saw the day breaking through the trees, and, looking back, there was Clou coddled up under a tree, waiting till the river should have sunk enough for his own simple strength.

What was the mystery of that night, I never could

resolve. I looked afterwards through French newspapers, with hope of lighting on something that would clear it up, but unprofitably. Perhaps there was nothing in it after all. Perhaps I had fallen off into dreaming after discovery of that cloak and cap, and so had furnished key-notes for my weary brain to run riot on.

However that may be, I have now only this to tell; — that I made the rest of my journey in all speed and safety, and was soon in London streets, with London flashing by, driving on to my own home, where Little Constancy was sitting up nearly restored, waiting with certain hope and confidence for my return upon her birthday.

A TALE OF AN OLD MAN'S YOUTH.

EVERYONE, who has ever read that terrible book, *The Mysteries of Paris*, will probably remember a scene, towards its close, where the escaped galley-slave, the Maître D'Ecole, arrives, blind and helpless, and lame, and old, at a farm beyond Paris, and asks shelter for the night. The dogs spring savagely at him as he enters, and would gladly tear him in pieces, if they could, and he looks down at the wicked little Tortillard who guides him, and whispers, "They smell the blood. These are the same clothes I wore, the day I killed the cattle-merchant at Poissy." He goes in — he sits down in the warm kitchen of the farm-house, and takes his evening-meal with the servants. But, lest he should be too comfortable — lest one stray gleam of sunshine should fall upon his path, Tortillard, who seems to have been his evil genius, hits upon a plan — a diabolical invention worthy of himself — by which he can recal him from the reverie into which he seems falling. The chains he wore as a galley-slave have left a wound in his leg, which will never heal, and which is most painful at times. The boy sits directly opposite to him, at table, and with all the malice of a little fiend, aims now and then a kick at him, which hits the open wound, and almost makes him scream with agony, while at the same time he exclaims, "Mon pauvre papa! mon pauvre papa!"

with an affected concern which wins the hearts of all around him.

It is many a year since I read the story, but as I go on through life, Tortillard seems to meet me on every side. In fact, he may be called a good type of the world. Have you a private grief or misery concealed, like the wound of the escaped convict, yet always throbbing and tingling, even in your most quiet moments? Be sure the world will find it out, and pierce to the very centre of it with a careless blow. If we cut, or in any way maim a limb, it becomes at once the limb of all others which is most certain to be hit against the corners of tables and chairs; it is the limb against which people stumble and open doors, with accidental recurrences, which look very much like settled purposes. And so with sorrows. That nerve of our hearts which can least bear exposure, is always most exposed, — and here a twinge, and there a sudden faintness, as we turn sharp angles in the path of life, show us that it is sensitive as ever.

I have thought of this, I fancy, more than most men; because I, myself, have such a sorrow. And I find that everything around me — things which, in themselves, are very dear to me — have a power to awaken it. I never see a violet upon a meadow-bank, that I do not remember a fairer flower that smiled into life and beauty, and then faded before my eyes. I never see a star, at night, without a thought of eyes more brilliant. I never hear a bird singing its happy heart out, in the summer time, without a sigh for a voice, now hushed for ever.

I lived long, long ago, in another land: in a quiet New England village, which nestled in the heart of the Green Mountains, of that most beautiful of all the states,

Vermont. That village is known to many as the birth-place and early home of Powers, the great American sculptor. The brain and heart that designed the peerless Greek Slave, were working beside the silver-flowing Queechy, some forty or fifty years ago, in many a prank of boyish mischief, and the hands that carved and chiselled that white dream of beauty, then wielded a ponderous jack-knife, and whittled out of bits of wood some faint foreshadowing, perhaps, of that which was yet to come. It was this that had tempted me to select it from all others for my summer residence, during a year of sickness and distress in the City of New York. It had a pretty English name — Woodstock — and was, I think, the fairest valley on which my eyes ever fell.

River and mountain, the bright Queechy, and the king of the hills, Mount Tom, lake and wood, and forest, — all were there. From one summit you looked down upon a region of pastoral beauty, with pretty low cottages, wide green meadows, and grazing flocks; from another you saw a fertile valley, with the river winding, like a serpent, through it, and mirroring in its bosom the clear blue sky. A third ascent, and a rock-bound country, gloomy with fir-trees, and keeping an unbroken silence like that of Siberia, met your view; while high up, upon the very summit of the great mountain, a lonely pond was lying, of which the school-children told strange tales. It had once stretched over vast acres, and bears and wolves had drunk from it when the country was wild and new, but with the march of civilisation, it had changed. Little by little the earth had filled it in, till the visitor could walk for half a-mile securely on what had once been treacherous slime. But the ground

quaked always beneath a step, and the prudent took good care not to venture too near the edge. I walked upon it once myself, and thought it very like these hearts of ours, in which, though we step ever so softly, we are ever liable to sink in beyond our depths, and, perhaps, rise no more.

But these were not all the attractions of the place. There were beautiful walks and drives; there were miniature lakes, upon which to row or sail a pleasure-boat; and a park, which was the pride of the whole state. It had grown up with the town, changing from an oval strip of ground, just boarded in and called a common, to a beautiful enclosure, hemmed in with maple trees as straight and luxuriant as trees could well be, decorated with an iron fence and gates, abounding with little walks and footpaths, and, in the spring, decked with grass as green as that of the Emerald Isle, and speckled and spangled with those two flowers of childhood — buttercups and daisies — like a carpet brought from Fairyland. It was a pretty place. I used often to sit and read and muse there; but when the summer months brought the usual influx of city visitors, I left the place to them, and wandered off in search of others more lonely.

In one of my mid-day walks, I struck suddenly upon a grass-grown road, leading off the main path, at the distance of some three miles from the town. I followed it up a little hill, switching with my cane at the peppermint that grew on each side, or stopping to watch a speckled adder who glided lazily in and out from the fragrant thicket, as I drew near to, or receded from, his home. An old house stood half-way up this hill, which was evidently the homestead of some well-to-do farmer. It was large and square, and standing back, with an

orchard climbing the green hills at its rear. Across the road which I was following, and just opposite the house, were three immense barns, whose great doors were standing open, to admit the carts of hay the oxen were drawing slowly from the hill pastures. Through these doors I caught a glimpse of the river-road below, the river itself, the covered bridge, blue sky, and the woods beyond. It was a delicious bit of colouring, done by the hand of the Great Artist himself. At my feet was a little pool of stagnant water, on which some white geese and ducks were fraternising, while a brood of half-grown turkeys, with their melancholy "Quit-quit," were making up a foraging party for an excursion after grasshoppers across the farm.

But the road, with its faint wheel-track on either side, and its broad streak of green in the middle, stretched on beyond the farmhouse and the barns, and I soon lost sight of them as I descended the other side of the hill. It was more lovely here, if such a thing were possible; because, with the same view, and with the same houses standing in the distance, I also found a silence beneath the blue sky of noon that was delightful. On one side of the fallen stone wall, a thicket of blackberries had grown over a heap of ruins, which marked the site of the first church or meeting-house ever erected in the town. On the other, and across the road, lay a little grave-yard, sloping quietly down to the road and river below. The gate had rusted from its hinges and lay upon the ground, half-hidden by the long grass that was growing over it. The tomb had not been in use for many a year; and as I peeped through the cracks of its door, I saw something lying on the floor, which I knew was nothing more nor less than the fragments of the

bier on which the coffins had once been borne out, but which, just then, I was pleased to magnify into the bones of a skeleton. The tender blue of an American summer's day was in the sky, and the sun shone down brightly and hotly. Nothing seemed to stir, save the grasshopper who leaped and chirped among the graves — a kind of Old Mortality among the insect tribe.

I followed the path still farther. And now, for the first time, it began to wind beside one of those bright leaping brooks, peculiar to America, and to New England most of all. I sauntered along, looking for minnows in the sun-light, and wishing I had nothing more to do than to spend existence in the same way, when a laugh, most clear and musical, made me start and look up.

The road had wound around, so that the lonely grave-yard upon the hill was shut out from my sight. In its place I beheld before me a long avenue, or rather grove, of maple trees, clothing the base and summit of another hill, far higher. The sparkling brook, with a last gush of music, leaped into the sunlit recesses of this forest, and was lost to my sight. But, on my right hand, stood a little bird's nest of a white-washed cottage, surrounded on all sides by a field of waving oats now nearly breast-high. A narrow footpath led from the rustic gate, up to the cottage door, which stood open; and at a well, close by the house, stood a young girl, apparently fishing with a line for something in the water, while a dark-eyed and very beautiful lady stood on the steps looking at her. A fat brown-and-white dog, with broad feet which turned out ludicrously — as if in no other way they could support the weight of his body — sat on the greensward in front of the gate, blinking sleepily at the sunshine and the flies. When he at last

saw me, he put up his head and gave a terrible howl, as if he felt deeply insulted by my approach — a sound which alarmed his young mistress, so that she dropped the line she held, and started back from the well in dismay. I then saw that she had long auburn curls, and that her face was full of that exquisite life and light and bloom, which youth and a sunny heart can shed upon the most irregular features. There was nothing for me but to make my excuses for my intrusion as well as I could; so, after pacifying the dog, I opened the boarded gate, and walked up to her. It was Lucy, whom I thus met, for the first time.

It is strange how soon a perfectly natural and simple manner sets one at ease. I had always been called, and had always thought myself, the shyest of men; yet, in five minutes I was talking with the little fairy as freely as if I had known her all my life. I had been introduced to Aunt Susan, who evidently regarded her young niece as the apple of her eye. I had been reconciled to Tiger, who, after much entreaty on the part of his mistress condescended to hold out his fat paw for me to shake, showing his teeth wickedly all the while, as if he would like to bite me, if she only was not there; and I had found the way to her heart by succeeding, after a long and patient effort, in rescuing from the well the line and pail with which she had been trying to draw water before I arrived. Then, seeing that I looked heated and tired, she insisted upon my coming into the cottage to have some of Aunt's currant wine, while I rested. I was only too glad to see her abode, and followed without any hesitation.

I must own that I have tasted better and sweeter wine than that which had been spoiling for two months

in the damp cellar at Gan-Eden; but I should have taken arsenic cheerfully, if her small hands had mixed the draught. I had seen her once or twice before in the park at Woodstock; had asked her name, and heard it, casually; and had afterwards heard that her aunt had taken this place to please her, and that they were living entirely by themselves in their romantic solitude, with the exception of an old family servant who came with them from the city, and the uncouth dog, who was the prime pet and favourite of Lucy. More than this I had not sought to hear; and Gan-Eden might have been located in the moon for aught I knew. Now that I had stumbled upon it, however, I looked around with no small degree of admiration, as Lucy did the honours of the two rooms to which I was admitted.

It was a little bower of a place, perched upon the banks of that same merry brook which had so beguiled me, and with its windows facing the south and the west. I do not know if the sun was coaxed into doing double duty there, or not, but I am sure I never saw rooms so full of his golden light before. Every door and window was always left open of a pleasant day; and through the hop-vines and the honeysuckles came the warm and perfumed air, the song of birds, the lowing of cattle, and the busy hum of bees, till the rooms seemed all alive with light and sound. It was by no means an uncommon thing to see a swallow dart through from one window to the other, and a frisky little squirrel crept into the kitchen each morning, and chirped saucily for his breakfast. By-and-by he brought his family with him; and I found Lucy, one morning, seated on the floor, scarcely daring to draw her breath, while the pretty creatures nibbled away, close beside her, at the

crumbs she had scattered for them. Her love for pets was not her least charm in my eyes. To be sure, when I found her, one day, with a spoon and pitcher, just outside the gate, trying to persuade a freckled ribbon-snake, who opened his brilliant eyes, and displayed his thread-like tongue in scorn, to drink the milk she poured for him in little grassy hollows along the road, I did object; but I tolerated her spiders and flies, and bugs and beetles, and dogs and cats, and even mice, because she had them under her immediate protection.

It was my first day at Gan-Eden; but ah! it was not my last. Many a sunshiny afternoon was spent in the little parlour, with its wreath-framed pictures, its flowers of every hue, its vine-shaded windows, and sloping terraced door. I read to Lucy's aunt, but I looked at Lucy, and made strange blunders with my reading. I walked over the hills, and traced out the spring of the dancing brook; and the little garden-hat was always by my side, reaching up to my heart, and no farther, when its owner stood beside me with her hands full of flowers and mosses, chattering as fast as her tongue could run, about her treasures. She treated me much as she did Tiger; and I was only too glad to be his fellow-slave. Yet I am sure the frank child never dreamed how dear she was growing to me. To her I was only "James," or "Brother James" — only a grave and serious man, too old, even then, to be more than a protector and a confidential friend; but not, alas for it! too old to love her, and that with a strength and tenderness a young man could never have felt. My staid manners made me seem even older than I really was; and her aunt entrusted her to me, in all our excursions, as complacently

as if I had been made of iron, instead of bearing about a living, beating heart, within my breast.

O, the golden days of that happy summer fled too quickly! Lucy met me, one afternoon, at the gate, with as sad a face as she could wear.

"We are going!" she sighed. "Aunt says it is time to go back to the city; and so we leave Gan-Eden to-day; spend a few days in town, and then return to noisy New York. I am sure, if it was not for some we shall meet there, I should never want to see the place again."

It would have been well for me if I had attended more to what she had just said; but the thought of her going away from the only place on earth that seemed fit for her, swallowed up everything else.

"I should like to visit the old places with you to-day, Lucy."

"Come in, then, and we will go, while the servant is packing the furniture."

The trees had just begun to put on their glorious autumn colours, and banners of red, purple, gold, crimson, russet, pale-yellow, green and brown, were flung out on every side. The September sunshine was yet warm in the middle of the day: and the smell of the beeches and the rustle of the dead leaves under foot — I remember them all, as if it were but yesterday! But when the light began to fade, and we turned towards home, I looked back at the lovely scene, and all was bare and grey, and perfectly desolate. Even so has my life been, Lucy!

It was a hard trial for her to leave the pretty place. There were so many leavetakings of old familiar spots, or many charges to the farmer who owned the house, to

let the oak wreaths hang as they were till a new tenant came in, and "Oh, to be sure, and feed the squirrels every day of his life;" — so many hints after Tiger, who was always supposed to have been drowned in the well, or smothered under the luggage; and so many outbursts of joy at finding him, safe and sound, and generally fast asleep, that it was nearly dark before I got her to take the last look, and let me lead her to the pony carriage which was waiting at the gate. I got her safely in at last, and saw her drive away; the little garden-hat always turned towards the cottage as long as it was in sight. Little she cared about Gan-Eden, or all I was losing with it. But I consoled myself with the thought that I was inseparably connected with it, in Lucy's mind. Never could she think of the flowers, and the sunshine, and the bees, without also giving a thought to the friend, who had watched and loved them with her. I went back and leaned against the well, where I had seen her first; I bent down and kissed the rough board where her hand had often rested. If a tear fell now and then, and broke the image of the star which shone so tranquilly in the water below, it was only known to me, and to that star, and to Him who made us both!

The few days she had mentioned fled like so many moments, and after that evening of moonlight and music, she was to leave us. I stood with her in the parlour of her uncle's house, about ten moments before the arrival of the stage. There were curtains of some transparent rose-coloured material at the windows, and she was festooning them back with some waxen white flowers, with green leaves — the last clippings of her aunt's conservatory — and the warm light fell upon her face as she made a graceful curtsy to me.

"There! Is not that pretty? When you come to see us in the city this winter, I shall arrange our parlours in the same way, to make you remember Woodstock and Gan-Eden."

"I am not likely to forget either of them," I said, looking fondly down at her, and in another moment it would have all been said, if she had not laid her hand upon my arm, and whispered:

"Dear old James, I should so like to tell you a secret."

"Well?"

"But you must never let my aunt know I told you, or she would give me a terrible lecture. I suppose it is very improper and all that, — but I should so like to tell you myself. I want you to come to us on the second week of January, and stay till after the twenty-fourth."

"And why till then?"

She blushed, and looked anywhere and everywhere but at me.

"Because, on the twenty-fourth I am to be married."

With a strong effort, I mastered myself, and turning my face from the light, prepared to hear and answer her next question, which soon came.

"Are you angry?"

"Not I," I answered steadily. "But does your aunt know this?"

She opened her large eyes with innocent wonder.

"Of course. How stupid you are getting, my dear old James. Why, she made the match!"

"Ah!"

"Edward is scarcely older than I am, but his father wishes him to marry, to make him steady, I believe, or some such nonsense, — as if such a fly-about as I am

would not unsettle him still more! However, we are very fond of each other."

"But how comes it, Lucy, that after all our familiar friendship, this is the first time I have even heard his name?"

She shook her curls about her face, and laughed.

"Oh, I didn't like, — I was afraid you would think it was silly. You are so grave and wise, and indeed I never should have had the courage now, only that I am going away. But, would you like to see his picture?"

"Yes."

She took a pretty little case of blue velvet from her pocket, and, unfastening the golden clasps, laid it open in my hand. I looked upon my rival. A dashing, handsome, audacious boy of twenty, with a midshipman's uniform, a pair of bright dark eyes, and an incipient moustache — that was all! He looked merry and happy enough, but he seemed more likely to be deeply in love with himself than with the pretty child they were going to give him for his wife. She needed training as well as loving, constancy as well as fervor. I could have been all to her, husband, father, and friend.

"Hark! there comes the stage!" she exclaimed, snatching the picture from my hand, and running away to call her aunt. Before she returned to me, I was calm, at least outwardly.

"You will be sure and come and see us when you get back to the city, the very day you come," she pleaded, standing on the steps, and holding my cold hand in both hers.

"Yes, Lucy."

"And remember, what I told you is a secret," she

added, dropping her voice a little. "You must not even speak of it in your letters, for aunt will always see them."

"I shall write, then?"

"What a question! Why, I depend upon you for all the news of Gan-Eden, and all the gossip of the town. You must go up to the old place now and then, James, for my sake, and feed my poor little squirrels. Dear old Gan-Eden!"

She looked wistfully up at me, and her tears began to fall.

"You have been so good, so kind!" she murmured. "Oh, what shall I do without you?"

God bless her! If they had but left her with me for those autumn months, and I had felt it not dishonourable to make the attempt, she would have loved me, I am sure.

When I had seated her in the coach beside her aunt, she leaned from the window, and put back her veil.

"James."

I turned back when I heard my name, and went up to her. There were no careless bystanders looking on, none but those who knew and loved her, and who were incapable of misconstruing anything her loving heart might make her do. As I stood beside her, she put her hand upon my shoulder, and whispered in my ear, "Do not forget Lucy!" Something warmer than the sun-shine, something sweeter than the south-wind, something softer than the new-fallen snow and quite as pure, just touched my cheek, and the stage rattled away, and bore her from me.

I put that timid, innocent kiss away within my

heart, and going to my room in a bustling hotel, locked myself in for the remainder of the day. Many years have come and gone, and my cheek has grown pale and thin, but Lucy's last farewell is remembered as vividly as in those first hours after I had lost her.

Who will wonder to hear me say I did not keep the promise I had made? I did write once or twice, but the letters I got in return, only wrung my heart; and it was a relief to me when I left Woodstock, and so could let my wanderings plead as the best excuse for my silence. Her quiet friendship was no return for the love that pained every fibre of my being, and I knew it was best to sever every tie that bound me to her, at once. I wrote the farewell I dared not trust myself to speak, and made it as cold and calm as even her lover could have wished. Then I went for the last time to Gan-Eden, and spent one whole day in the places we had loved. My last visit was to the house, which still stood empty. I did not enter by the usual way, but crossed the brook, from the hill, and went round to the back of the house. At a low window, through which Tiger used to escape when his mistress had confined him to the house, lest he should follow us, I stopped, and raising the sash, looked in. The oak garlands which she had hung with her own hands upon the walls, rustled drily as the cold wind blew. I saw a single faded rose lying on the floor. She had worn it in her hair on the evening of her departure, and I had seen her take it out and throw it aside before she tied on her hat. I had intended to secure it then, but something had drawn my attention away, and through all these weary weeks, it had been waiting for me, that it might speak to me of her. Poor faded thing! I en-

tered the room, and put the dead rose carefully in my breast. My footsteps made a hollow sound upon the decaying floor, and the squirrel, fat and sleek as ever, ran from a hiding-place behind the door, and vanished through the window. It was a pleasure, at least, to think the little fellow had not fallen into neglectful hands since she had gone. I leaped out upon the ground again, took one long last look into the dear old room, shut down the window, and turned away. From that hour, there was no Gan-Eden for me, save in my dreams.

I went away, to the land of gold. My fortune was already sufficient for all my wants, but I felt that stirring and striving within me which must be silenced, and I knew no better course to take. I plunged into the wildest speculations, and bought and sold at such daring risks that those who had known me in my quiet and steady days, said I had gone mad. And so I had — and yet I prospered, because success was nothing to me. Like King Midas, everything I touched turned to gold — till the sight of it became almost hateful to me.

Now came the time when I might have filled Lucy's place, had I wished it. Beautiful women looked kindly on the butter-fly, who would have spurned the caterpillar. But I had grown moody and reserved, and their smiles and blandishments fell on me like sunshine on granite. If ever I sat by my lonely fireside and thought of marriage, the words of the gentle Elia, came to my mind. "The children of Alice call Bertram father," and I sighed, and stirred the coals, and let my thoughts wander away.

It was a selfish life, as well as a lonely one. But one day there came a change. It was ushered in by a terrible illness, and a suffering like unto death. When

it passed, I was another man. The angel had "troubled the waters;" a Hand which was not mortal had laid me in the pool; my eyes were opened, and my infirmities were healed. I saw that if all that could make earth glad and beautiful, had been taken from me, it was only that I might learn to lay up treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and thieves cannot break through, nor steal. I heard the poor crying out on every side for succour, and when I was able, I gave it, for the sake of Him who held the poor in loving remembrance. It is most true that no good work which is done in the name and for the sake of God, can ever lose its reward. Even while I was thus holding the "cup of cold water," to the parched lips of His little ones, His grace was filling my heart with a new and living light.

It was then that I first sought some tidings of her. The friend to whom I wrote, gave me a brief answer. She was dead! Carried away by the raging of the great pestilence; and the young husband had already filled her place with a second wife.

From that day I have never written her name until now; but she has always lived within my heart. My affections are no longer placed on the things of this world; they bud and bloom in a brighter one, and I hope one day to gather their blossoms there.

YEARS AND YEARS AGO.

"Toutes ces choses sont passées
Comme l'ombre et comme le vent!"

VICTOR HUGO.

These things have passed upon their mournful way,
Like the wild wind, and like the shadows grey.

SUZANNE was not sixteen, and I was barely nineteen, when we first met. She was the daughter, the only child, of a poor Protestant pastor near La Rochelle, one of the chief and oldest strongholds of the French Reformed Church.

At that time I was about as wild a scape-grace as you would see in any place I could name at this moment. I had been expelled from school for heading an insurrection against the proper authorities; I had got into endless scrapes in every position in which my poor father had tried to establish me; had finished when I was eighteen by throwing off all restraint, crossing the water, and, with a knapsack on my back, starting on a pedestrian tour through some of the French provinces, not with any definite aim or object, or in pursuance of any settled plan, but to exercise my usurped liberty, and to get rid of some of the superfluous life that would not let me rest. Of adventures I had plenty; but the relation of these is little to the point now. At La Rochelle, chance, as I called it then, threw Suzanne in my way. Whether she was beautiful or not, I hardly know. She was utterly unlike anyone I ever saw before

or since; — a little thing with a pair of eyes that prevented your seeing anything else when they were before you; — a pair of eyes which, like those of the German fairy, were not only one barleycorn bigger (I think they were two barleycorns bigger) than anybody else's eyes in the world; but which loved you, and repulsed you, and pitied and scorned you, and laughed with you, and cried for you, and made you wild with delight, and desperate with despair, twenty times a-day.

From the first time I saw her, I pursued her without ceasing; and we often met by those accidents that occur when two people do their best to aid fate in her arrangements. At the back of the presbytère was a garden full of roses, and lilies, and jasmines, and all sorts of beautiful old-fashioned flowers that grow anywhere you may plant them, but that can no more get common or worthless for all their bounteous blooming, than if they required to be watered with champagne. Beyond the garden is what is called a châtaigneraie; a little wood, carpeted with close turf, moss and wild-flowers, overshadowed with magnificent chestnut-trees, each of which might form a study for a landscape-painter. Only a paling and a wicket separated the garden and the wood; and, the latter being unenclosed, any one had a right to wander there at will, — a privilege of which the peasants in the neighbourhood, having other means of employing their time, seldom availed themselves; and it was, except at the chestnut gathering, generally deserted.

So there I used to repair in the glowing July days, with a sketch-book, to look business-like; and, lying on the grass, or leaning against a tree, myself half-hidden,

watch for Suzanne. How it is all before me now — before me now, and in me, and about me — Good heaven, how clearly, — after all these years!

The broad, rugged trunks of the trees; the sunlight streaming with a soft, green light through the leaves; the warm, ripe, still heat that quivered before my half-closed eyes; and there, there beyond, through a narrow vista, an opening, as it were, into heaven, in the guise of a little bit of the pastor's garden, blazing in sunshine and flowers. On this my eyes would fix till the angel should come to give it a holier light. Sometimes I waited through the long hours in vain; sometimes I saw her pass and repass, coming and going like alternate sun and shadow, as the place seemed brightened or darkened with her presence and departure. Then, how my heart beat; how I watched, how I listened! — did she guess I was there? — did she wish to come? — was it timidity or indifference that prevented her turning her steps this way? — Useless. She would not come to-day; and, cross and sick at heart, I left the wood, and wandered home-ward to mine inn, — the bare, hot chambers of which, with the old fumes of bad stale tobacco, were little calculated to soothe the nerves that had been stung and fretted and ruffled in the green, cool, perfumed chestnut wood.

Next day all would be joy and hope again. Back once more to the sylvan temple, where I hoped to meet the shy goddess. An hour, — two — would pass, and then she floated to and fro across that bit of sunshine, gathering a flower here; tying one up there; watering, trimming, dipping further on; wondering, as she has since told me, and as I little guessed then, if I were there in the wood watching her. Presently, with a

basket on her arm, she would turn into the shady walk; nearer and nearer came her footstep; fuller and fuller throbbed my heart; then, with her hand on the wicket, she would pause; had she changed her mind? would she go back? and at that thought my soul so yearned for her, that it seemed the influence must act to draw her towards me; and sometimes I almost thought it did so; as, opening the gate, she stepped into the wood; and slowly, with downcast eyes, roved to and fro, in search, as I believed, of the yellow mushrooms that grow in the chestnut woods in France.

A few moments more, and we were together, she still pursuing her search, though many a mushroom was passed, many another trodden on; I, pacing by her side, speaking low, and at intervals, while she sometimes answered without looking up, sometimes gave me a glance of those miraculous eyes in lieu of other answer; till at last, youth and love, and solitude encouraging, the hand that at first dared not to touch hers, wound round her waist, the lips that trembled to pronounce her name pressed hers unforbidden.

And now, shall I tell the truth? — a truth that many and many a time since has not only stung me with remorse, but with the thought, that perhaps — Well, well, that may or may not have been. But to my confession: —

Young as I was, Suzanne was not the first woman I fancied I had loved; and though the feeling I had for her was widely different from that with which I had regarded others, still it was not then pure, and deep, and fervent as it ought to have been. At first, much as I loved her, much as I desired to obtain her love, I had no thought of indissolubly uniting my destiny to hers; I

had no idea of marriage. I contented myself with letting things run their course, whatever they might tend to; with taking no thought, and making no engagement for the future.

At last our meetings in the châtaigneraie became things of daily occurrence; and we needed no subterfuges of sketch-book and mushroom-baskets to colour them. Sweet, pure, darling Suzanne! Who, in her position, at her age, could have withstood the dangers of the situation as she did? She loved me with all the depth and warmth of a profound and passionate nature; yet in the midst of her abandon, there was a purity, a starting, instinctive shyness — a turning of the flank of danger, as it were, while appearing unconscious of its vicinity — that at once captivated and repelled me. And days drew on to weeks, and still our relative positions remained unaltered.

One day we were in the châtaigneraie together, strolling side by side, her hand in mine, when the unusual sound of footsteps rustling 'mid the last year's leaves, startled us. We turned round, and at a little distance beheld her father.

He was a man still in the prime of life. But indifferent health, and a ceaseless activity in the arduous duties of his calling, gave to his spare figure and fine face a worn, and prematurely aged look. I shall never forget him, as after a moment's pause he advanced and confronted us; the veins in his bare temples swollen and throbbing with the emotion he sought to control, his face pale and rigid, and his lips compressed.

There was a dead silence for some seconds. Then his kindling eye flashed on his daughter, and pointing

to the house, he said in a low, stern voice: "Go in, Suzanne." She went without a word.

"And thus, young man," he said, when she was out of hearing, "thus, for the gratification of a passing fancy, to kill the time you know not how to dispose of, you blot an honest and hitherto stainless name. You break a father's heart; you turn from her God — you destroy body and soul — a mere child, motherless and unprotected. I will not tell what Suzanne has been to me; how I have reared her, worked, hoped, prayed for her, loved and trusted her. All these things are, doubtless, tame and commonplace and contemptible to you. But if you had no fear of God or consideration for man before your eyes, could you not have had a little feeling, a little pity, an atom of respect for a father and daughter situated as you know us to be? Knowing, moreover, that it is not in the heart or in the hand of the Minister of God to avenge the wrong and shame done him by the means other dishonoured fathers adopt?"

Utterly abashed and conscience-stricken, I strove to explain; but my emotion, and the sudden difficulty that came over me in expressing myself adequately in a foreign language — fluently as, under ordinary circumstances I spoke it — were little calculated to reassure him.

"No," he said, "I know all. Your daily meetings, your prolonged interviews, a certain embarrassment I have lately noticed in my child, hitherto so frank and fearless; her altered looks and manner — even note the demeanour of both when I surprised you — what can I conclude from such indications?"

"I swear to you," I at length found words to explain, "that your daughter is wholly and perfectly inno-

cent. Think of me as you will, but at least believe me in this, and assure yourself that your child is sinless."

He looked at me scrutinisingly for some seconds; then his face and voice relaxed. "I believe you! There is but one thing you can now do, if you are sincere in your wish to repair this evil. Promise me you will never see Suzanne again, and that you will, as soon as possible, quit this neighbourhood."

I promised, and we parted.

How I passed that night it needs not now to tell, nor all the revolution the thoughts it brought worked in my heart and in my ideas. The immediate result was, that next morning at dawn I rose from my sleepless bed, and wrote to the pastor, asking his daughter's hand; not concealing the difficulties of my position, but adding that if he would overlook present and material disadvantages he might trust that no sin of omission or commission on my part should ever cause him to regret his having accorded his sanction to our marriage, and that I feared not but that with time, patience, and perseverance, I should be able to secure a means of existence. At nineteen it is so easy to dispose of these questions of ways and means; to obtain everything and to dispense with everything.

The answer came quickly, brought by the pastor in person.

"You are an honest lad," he said. "I will not now enter into the question of your youth and that of Suzanne: — my child's reputation is at stake, and she is deeply attached to you. That of your prospects is one we have yet to discuss; but the first subject to be entered upon and fully explained is the one of your father's consent to the marriage. In the first place, by

the law of France, which is, I believe, different to that of England, no man or woman, even if of age, can marry without producing proof of their parents' acquiescence. In the second, even were the law otherwise, I should hold myself bound for conscience sake, not to take advantage of the most desirable proposal, if it were made against the wishes and without the sanction of yours. Are you likely to obtain this?"

Here was a difficulty I had neither anticipated nor provided for. I had thrown off all authority, deeming my own sufficient for my governance, and here, at the first important crisis of my life, I found its inefficiency to get me through my earliest difficulty. Supposing I made up my mind tacitly to admit my mistake, and ask my father's consent to my marriage, was it in the least likely that he would, under all the circumstances, accord it?

Never mind, I must make the attempt, and so admitting to the pastor that I had not as yet provided for such a contingency, he left me to write to my father.

A week of agonising suspense passed, during which I, in accordance with a promise made to Suzanne's father, never sought to meet her — nay, to avoid a shadow of suspicion, never even went to our chestnut-wood, to get a peep of her in the garden.

At last the letter came, and sick with agitation, I tore it open. It was brief, grave, somewhat stern, but yet not different to what I deserved, and what I expected.

My father said he had reflected much on my demand: — that he saw many reasons why he should refuse it, yet he was so anxious to meet my wishes

when they pointed to any course that was not likely to lead me into moral mischief, and that afforded me a chance of obtaining steadiness of conduct, that if I could provide him proofs of my intended bride's character and position being such as I represented them, he would not withhold his permission.

This was easily done; proud and elate, I boldly presented myself at the presbytery, and within a month, we were married, despite all the delays and difficulties that the French laws, which seem especially framed to throw every possible obstacle, hindrance, and petty vexation in the way of the impatient lover, could find to circumvent us.

I look back now on the time, and see through my spectacles — though a little dimmed, now and then — not myself, and my Suzanne, the wife of my youth, as I saw her in those days; but a boy and girl I remember to have known then. A hopeful, happy, foolish pair; brimful of youth and life and love; seeing all things, each other included, quite other than they were; yet so confident in themselves, in their experience, their ideas, their impressions: — living from day to day, like the birds on the branch, as if all the world were their storehouse, and no to-morrow were before them. Quarrelling and making sweet friends again; fretting about a look or a word; jesting at questions involving the most important material interests; averted looks and murmured reproaches over a flower presented and lost; not a thought or a care for gold squandered.

The place was so endeared to me, and Suzanne, and her father felt so reluctant to part, that I resolved, — my father, who made us a small, though reasonable

allowance, not objecting, — to settle, for a time, at all events, in the neighbourhood of La Rochelle.

So we took a little house in the midst of a garden, within five minutes' walk of the presbytery, and there we set up our household, served by a plump Rochellaise damsel, whose clear-starched capot* and gold earrings, heart and cross, were on Sundays, the admiration of the place; and a lad emancipated from sabots, to work in the garden, and help Nannie in the rougher occupations of the house. He fell in love with her, I remember, and he being some years her junior, and she being rather a belle and virtuous withal, she was moved, by all these united considerations, to box his ears on his attempting to demonstrate the state of his feelings by trying to kiss her when, attired as above recorded, her beauty shone forth too resplendent for him to succeed in controlling his youthful passion.

Before a year was out, the two children had a doll to put in the baby-house, and to play with from morning till night. They nursed it alternately, and worshipped it, and had moments of jealousy about it, and wondered over it, and found it a miracle of genius and intellect, when to stranger eyes it was capable of nothing but sleeping and sucking and stretching its toes before the fire.

When it should walk! O when it should walk, and when it should speak its mother's name! — When it

* The "Capot" is the head-dress peculiar to La Rochelle and its neighbourhood. It consists of a frame-work fixed upright on the head, round which is loosely folded a strip some three or four yards long, and about half a yard wide, of clear muslin, bordered at each edge with lace, and terminating in a rounded end, pinned in front. Considerable skill and practice is necessary to attach the capot properly, as it is arranged on the head.

did, the child-mother lay in her grave in the Protestant cemetery at La Rochelle, and the boy-father took it there to strew flowers on the turf.

When I first awoke from the stunning effect of the blow, I was like a ship that struck full by a tremendous breaker, stands for a moment paralysed and grieving, then staggers blindly on, without rudder or compass, both swept away in the general ruin.

The wild spirit within me, which the peaceful and innocent happiness of the last two years had soothed and stilled, broke forth again, and my first impulse was to rush from the scene of my lost felicity, and in a life of reckless adventure seek to lose myself and the recollection of all I had won, all I had been bereft of in that short space.

Thank God, I had the child. That saved me.

And now at twenty-one, when most men have hardly made their first start in life, I, a father and a widower, had passed the first stages of my manhood's career, and was about to gather up the shattered fragments of my youth's hopes and prospects, and try to patch them together to carry me through the rest of it.

At first my father, now all affection and sympathy, since the change my marriage had brought, urged my returning with the child to England. But this a strange feeling, partaking perhaps more of jealousy than anything else, made me decline doing. On Mabel, "Mabelle" as Suzanne used to call her, half-believing that that was really the translation of the name, had now concentrated all the love and interest of my life. Here she was all my own, I was all hers; nothing, nobody, could lay any claim to the love, the time or the attention of either, so as to distract it from the other. No

one could exert influence or authority over either to the exclusion or prejudice, in however slight a degree, of the other.

My child had no mother; no one else therefore, however near or dear, should in any degree supply her place but myself. I would be all and everything to her, and if she never missed her mother, it should be to me alone she should owe it. A foolish thought perhaps, perhaps a selfish one; yet who shall say, seeing from what it doubtless saved me?

Happily the child was healthy, sweet-tempered, and really, all paternal illusions apart, singularly beautiful and intelligent. My baby, my little Queen Mab! I see her now, as in her black frock and straw hat I used to carry her forth at first in the still warm evenings, when the glow and the glare of the day had passed by, and the sea-breeze stirred the roses in the garden.

With her I did not feel quite so frightfully alone: her signs, her attempts at speech, her little wilfulnesses, her caresses, her ceaseless claims on my aid and attention, withdrew me as nothing else could from constant brooding over my loss. Later, when I could bear it — I could not, for a long time — I used to take her to the châtaigneraie, where I was wont to watch for Suzanne, and sitting there as of old, leave her to play on the grass beside me, while with half-shut eyes, I gazed on the glowing spot at the end of the green walk, dreaming, dreaming, with a gnawing at my heart, of the shadow that used to cross it, of the footstep that used to come along that shaded alley, of the pause with the hand on the wicket. Then I remembered that now not all the yearning and craving of my soul could, as I fancied it did of old, bring her one step nearer to me: and then

my grief and desolation would find vent in passionate tears, and the child, who was too well used to see me weep to be alarmed, as children mostly are, would climb up on my breast, and draw my hands from before my face, and kiss and soothe me with her sweet baby caresses.

It was a great though secret joy to me, that though gentle and tractable to all, she could be said to love no one but me. I think the excellent pastor guessed the existence of this feeling; for fond as he was of the child, and strong and natural were his claims to her affection, he ever avoided to put them conspicuously forward, or to attempt, in any way to interfere with her management. For this, even more than for his many other proofs of regard and kindness, I was deeply grateful. I encouraged the child to be familiar with him. But though she showed deference and duty, and even returned his caresses, I could see with secret triumph that her heart was not in her acts, and that as soon as she thought she might without offence return to me, she would glide from his knee, and stealing to mine, nestle on my breast, content to rest there till we were alone again. Then the repressed spirits would break forth, and she was once more gleeful and joyous.

Early in the morning I would wake, and behind the half-drawn curtain, watch her playing, silently, lest she should disturb me, in the dewy garden. Wandering to and fro, with her hands crossed behind her, now pausing before this or that flower, smelling it, sucking the pearly drops that lay in its cup; then racing away suddenly, wild with strong young life, prancing and plunging in imitation of a high-mettled steed, or chasing

the kitten that was not more graceful or lithe of limb than she.

And so on, till the opening of my lattice announced that I was astir. O, the sunshine of the radiant face! She had her mother's wondrous eyes, but with a fine fair English complexion and warm, light-brown English hair. Then pit-a-pat up the narrow staircase, came the quick step, the door was flung open, and in two bounds she was on my bed, hugging and kissing me, laughing, patting my cheeks, laying her sweet cool face against mine, and chattering the strange mingled dialect between French and English, that was sweeter in my ears than purest Tuscan.

Then off again, like a butterfly, opening my books, putting my watch to her ear, and looking solemnly curious at the sound; turning over my clothes, scribbling wild flourishes on my paper with pen or pencil, and, quick as flight of bird, away again to announce to Nannie that "le grand chère," the great darling, was awake, and so hungry, so hungry for his breakfast.

And so through the day, however I might be occupied, she was never away from me for an hour. Light and restless, like some winged thing, she was to and fro, up and down in the house and garden, all the live-long day; dancing, singing, talking to herself, when I was too occupied to attend to her; no more disturbing me in my busiest hours than the sunshine that streamed in at my window, or the swallows that built and chirped in the eaves above it. Long walks we used to take together, she bounding by my side, now clinging to my hand, now springing off after wild-flower or berry, till lap and arms were full; all beaming and joyous until a beggar came in sight; then the bright face would lengthen

the step slacken, and the small money I always carried in my pocket to provide against such emergencies, was brought into request, and given with willing hand and gentle words of pity and condolence, and for some paces further the little heart and brain were yet oppressed with the impression of the sight of suffering.

In the evenings, by the dying sunlight or the winter fire, she would climb to my knee, claiming a story; and, while I related some remembered history, or improvised some original one, there she sat, with raptured face, gazing on mine, those eyes so full of wondering interest, those ruby lips apart, showing the glistening teeth; putting in now and then some earnest question, pausing long at the close of the narrative to muse over it and fully digest certain points that had made a deeper impression than the rest of the tale. Then, as the light fell and the stillness of evening deepened into night, the head drooped on my breast, and, like a folded flower, the blossom that brightened and perfumed my lonely life, slept quietly, while I, sad and silent, wandered mournfully over the past.

I look back now to that period of my life, and again it is not I whom I see sitting there before me. It is one I knew, whose affections, cares, and troubles were as my own to me; but whose thoughts, opinions, and aspirations were quite other than those I now hold, and on which I now act. The child seems hardly real, distinctly as I remember every — the slightest — detail concerning her; she comes before me in my lonely hours like the remembrance of some vivid dream dreamed long ago; some vision sent to cheer and brighten my pathway through some long past stage of an existence that then seemed drawing on to its close.

We know so little what we can live through and over, till the present is merged in the things that have been! till the pages on which are inscribed in black letter the great griefs of our lives are turned, and those that contain pleasanter passages are laid over them!

Mabel had achieved her tenth year before I had reached my thirtieth birthday; and all that time we had never been a day separated; had never lived any other life than the life I have been describing.

I had taught her to read and write, Nannie had taught her to sew; but other accomplishments she had none. Partly that strange jealousy of other interference, partly a horror I could not control of subjecting my fairy to the drudgery of learning, made me shrink from calling in other aid to advance her education. It was better that it should be so. I am always glad now to think that I did as I had done.

My child had been lent me, not given. For ten years her blessed and soothing, purifying and holy influence was granted to tame and save me. For ten years God spared one of his angels to lead me through the first stages to Heaven!

The task accomplished, He saw fit to recall the loan.

It is thirty years and upwards now, since Mabel died.

I have buried another wife since then, and two fair children; and four more yet remain to me.

They are good, dear children to me, none better; and handsome boys and girls too. But they are none of them like my Mab, my little fairy queen: — and I am not sorry; it is as well as it is.

LOST ALICE.

CHAPTER I.

WHY did I marry her? I often asked myself the question, in the days that succeeded our honeymoon. By right, I should have married no one. Yet I loved her, as I love her still.

She was, perhaps, the strangest character of her age. In her girlhood, I could not comprehend her; and I often think, when I raise my eyes to her grave, quiet face, as she sits opposite me at dinner, that I do not comprehend her yet. There are many thoughts working in her brain of which I know nothing, and flashes of feeling look out at her eyes now and then, and go back again, as captives might steal a glimpse of the outer world through their prison bars, and turn to their brick-walled solitude once more. She is my wife. I have her and hold her as no other can. She bears my name, and sits at the head of my table; she rides beside me in my carriage, or takes my arm as we walk; and yet I know and feel, all the time, that the darling of my past has fled from me for ever, and that it is only the ghost of the gay Alice, whom I won in all the bloom of her bright youth, that lingers near me now.

She was not a child when I married her, though she was very young. I mean, that life had taught her lessons which are generally given only to the grey-haired

and had laid burdens upon her which belong of right to the old. She had been an unloved child, and at the age of sixteen she was left to herself, and entirely dependent on her own exertions. Friends and family she had none, so she was accustomed laughingly to say; but I have since found that her sisters were living, and in happy homes, even at the time when she accepted that awful trust of herself, and went out of the great world to fulfil it. Of this part of her life she never speaks; but one who knew her then has told me much. It was a time of struggle and pain, as well it might have been. Fresh from the life of a large boarding-school, she was little fitted for the bustle of a great selfish city, and the tears come to my eyes as I think, with a kind of wonder, on the child who pushed her way through difficulties at which strong men have quailed, and made herself a name, and a position, and a home. She was a writer, — at first a drudge, for the weekly press, poorly paid, and unappreciated. By-and-by, brighter days dawned, and the wolf went away from the door. She was admired, read, sought after, and — above all — paid. Even then, she could not use the wisdom she had purchased at so dear a rate. She held her heart in her hand, and it was wrung and tortured every day.

“I may as well stop breathing as stop loving,” she would say, with a happy smile. “Don’t talk to me about my folly. Let me go on with my toys; and, if they break in my hand, you cannot help it, and I shall not come to you for sympathy.”

She was not beautiful; but something — whether it was her bright, happy face, or the restless gaiety of her manner — bewitched people, and made them like her. Men did the maddest things imaginable for her sake;

and not only young men in whom folly was pardonable, but those who should have been too wise to be caught by the sparkle of her smile, or the gay ringing of her laugh. She did not trust them; her early life had taught her better; but I think she liked them for awhile, till some newer fancy came, and then she danced past them, and was gone.

It was in the country that I met her first; and there she was more herself than in the city. We were distant relatives, though we had never seen each other, and the Fates sent me to spend my summer vacation with my mother's aunt, in a country village, where she was already domesticated. Had I known this, I should have kept my distance; for it was only a fourteenth or fifteenth cousinship that lay between us, and I had a kind of horror of her. I hardly knew why. I was a steady-going, quiet sort of lawyer, and hated to have my short holiday of rest and quiet broken in upon by a fine lady. I said as much to my aunt, in return for her announcement of "Alice Kent is here," with which she greeted me. She looked over her spectacles in quiet wonder as I gave her a slight sketch of the lady's city life, as I had had it from the lips of "Mrs. Grundy" herself.

"Well — live and learn, they say. But whoever would think it was our Alice you are talking of, Frank! However, I'll say no more about her! You'll have plenty of time to get acquainted with her, in the month you mean to pass here. And we are glad to see you, and your bed-room is ready, — the one you used to like."

I took up my hat, and strolled away to have a look at the farm. By-and-by, I got over the orchard wall, and crossed the brook, and the high road, and went out into

the grove behind the house, whose farthest trees were growing on the side of the hill which looked so blue and distant from my chamber window. It was an old favourite place of mine. A broad wagon track led through the woods, out to a clearing on the other side, where was a little sheet of water, called The Fairy's Looking-glass, and a beautiful view of a lovely country, with the steep green hills lying down in the distance, wrapped in a soft fleecy mantle of cloud and haze. I could think of nothing when I stood there, on a fine sunshiny day, but the long gaze of Bunyan's Pilgrim through the shepherd's glass, at the beautiful city towards which he was journeying. And it seemed sometimes as if I could wander "over the hills and far away," and lose myself in one of the fair valleys at the foot of those hills, and be content never to come out and face the weary world any more.

I walked slowly through the woods, with the sunshine falling through the green leaves of the young beeches in chequered radiance on my path, drawing in long breaths of the fresh air, and feeling a tingling in my veins and a glow at my heart, as if the blood were flowing newly there, until I came to the little circular grove of pines and hemlocks that led out upon the Fairy's Looking-glass. Something stirred as I pierced my way through the branches, and I heard a low growl.

A girl was half-sitting, half-lying, in the sunshine beside the little lake, throwing pebbles into the water, and watching the ripples that spread and widened to the other shore. A great black Newfoundland dog was standing between me and her, showing a formidable row of strong white teeth, and looking me threateningly in the face.

She started, and looked sharply round, and saw me standing in the little grove with the dog between us. She burst out laughing.

I felt that I was cutting rather a ridiculous figure, but I put a bold face upon the matter, and asked coolly, "Are you Alice Kent?"

"People call me so."

"Then I suppose I may call you cousin, for I am Frank Atherton?"

"Cousin Frank! We have been expecting you this week. When did you come?"

"Just now."

She made room for me beside her. We talked long, about our family, our mutual friends, and the old homestead of the Athertons, which she had seen, though I had not. She told me about the house, and our cousins who were then living there, and I sat listening, looking now and then at her, as she sat with the sunshine falling round her, and the great dog lying at her feet. I wondered, almost as my aunt had done, if this was indeed the Alice Kent of whom I had heard so much. She was dressed plainly, very plainly, in a kind of grey material, that fell around her in light soft folds. A knot of plain blue ribbon fastened her linen collar, and a gipsy hat, lying beside her, was trimmed with the same colour. Her watch chain, like a thread of gold, and a diamond ring, were the only ornaments she wore. Yet I had never seen a dress I liked so well. She was tall (too tall, I should have said, had she been anyone else; for, when we were standing, her head was almost on a level with mine) and slender, and quick and agile in all her movements. Her brown hair was soft and pretty, but she wore it carelessly pushed away from her fore-

head: not arranged with that nicety I should have expected in a city belle. Her features were irregular, full of life and spirit, but decidedly plain: her complexion fair, her mouth rather large, frank and smiling; her eyebrows arched, as if they were asking questions; and her eyes large, and of a soft dark grey, very pleasant to look into, very puzzling too, as I found afterwards to my cost. Those eyes were the only beauty she possessed, and she unconsciously made the most of them. Had she been a Carmelite nun, she would have talked with them; she could not have helped it. When they laughed, it seemed their normal state — the bright-beaming glance they gave; but, when they darkened suddenly and grew softer and deeper, and looked up into the face of any unfortunate wight with an expression peculiar to themselves, heaven help him!

Though I had known her only five minutes, I felt this, when I chanced to look up and meet a curious glance she had fixed on me. She had ceased to talk, and was sitting, with her lips half apart and a lovely colour mantling on her cheek, studying my face intently, when our eyes met. There was an electric kind of shock in the gaze. I saw the colour deepen and go up to her forehead, and a shiver ran over me from head to foot. It was dangerous for me to watch that blush, but I did; and I longed to know its cause, and wondered what thought had brought it.

"Fred, bring me my hat," she said to her dog, affecting to yawn. "It is time for us to go home to supper, I suppose. Are you hungry, cousin Frank?"

"Yes — no," I answered, with my thoughts still running on that blush.

She laughed good-naturedly, and took the hat from the Newfoundland, who had brought it in his mouth.

"How fond you are of that great dog," I said, as we rose from our seat beneath the tree.

"Fond of him?" She stooped down over him with a sudden impetuous movement, took his head between her two hands, and kissed the beauty-spot on his forehead. "Fond of him, cousin Frank? Why, the dog is my idol! He is the only thing on earth who is or has been true to me, and the only thing —" She stopped short, and coloured.

"That you have been true to," I said, finishing the sentence for her.

"So people say," she answered, with a laugh. "But look at him — look at those beautiful eyes, and tell me if any one could help loving him. My poor old Fred! So honest in this weary world."

She sighed, and patted his head again, and he stood wagging his tail and looking up into her face, with eyes that were as she had said, beautiful, and, what was better far, brimful of love and honesty.

"I doubt if you will keep pace with us," she said, after we had walked a few steps; "and Fred is longing for a race; I always give him one through the woods. Would you mind?"

"Oh dear, no!"

The next moment she was off like the wind, and the dog tearing after her, barking till the woods rang again. I saw her that night no more.

CHAPTER II.

I WAS, as I have already said, a grave, steady-going lawyer, verging towards a respectable middle age, with one or two grey hairs showing among my black locks. I had had my dreams and fancies, and my hot, eager, generous youth, like most other men; and they had passed away. But one thing I had not known, one thing I had missed (save in my dreams), and that was a woman's love.

If I ever gave my visions a body and a name, they were totally unlike all the realities I had ever seen. The wife of my fireside reveries was a slight, delicate, gentle creature, with a pure pale face, sweet lips, the bluest and clearest of eyes, the softest and finest of golden hair, and a voice low and sweet, like the murmurings of an *Æolian* harp. And she sat by my chair in silence; loving me always, but loving me silently, and her name was Mary. I dare say, if I had met the original of this placid picture in life, I should have wooed and won her, and have been utterly miserable.

So, as a matter of course, I fell into danger now. When Alice Kent went singing and dancing through the house, leaving every door and window open as she went, I used often to lay down my pen and look after her, and feel as if the sun shone brighter for her being there. When she raced through the grove or orchard with the great dog at her heels, I smiled, and patted Fred on the head: when she rode past the house at a hand gallop on her grey pony, Fra Diavolo, and leaped him over the garden gate, and shook her whip saucily in my face, I laid aside my book to admire her riding, and never thought her unwomanly or ungraceful.

We grew to be great friends — like brother and sister, I used to say to myself. How that liking glided gradually into loving, I could not have told. I met her one day in the village street. I turned a corner, and came upon her suddenly. She was walking slowly along, with her dog beside her, and her eyes fixed upon the ground, looking graver and more thoughtful than I had ever seen her before. At sight of me her whole face brightened suddenly; yet she passed me with a slight nod and a smile, and took her way towards home. Seeing that flash of light play over her grave face, and feeling the sudden bound with which my heart sprang up to meet it, I knew what we were to each other.

It was late when I reached home, after a musing walk. The farmer and his wife had gone to bed, the children were at a merrymaking at the next house, and a solitary light burned from the parlour window, which was open. The full moon shone fairly in a sky without a cloud. I unfastened the gate and went in; and there in the open door sat Alice, with a light shawl thrown over her shoulders, her head resting on the shaggy coat of the Newfoundland dog. His beautiful brown eyes watched me as I came up the path, but he did not stir.

I sat down near her; but on the lower step, so that I could look up in her face.

"Alice, you do not look well."

"But I am. Quite well. I am going away to-morrow."

"Going away! Where?"

"Home. To London. Well? What ails you, cousin Frank? Did you never hear of any one who went to London before!"

"Yes: but why do you go?"

“Why?” She opened her eyes and looked at me. “For many reasons. Firstly, I only came for six weeks, and I have stayed nearly three months; secondly, because I have business which can be put off no longer; and thirdly, because my friends are wondering what on earth keeps me here so long (they will say soon, it is you, Frank). They vow they cannot do without me any longer, and it is pleasant to be missed, you know.”

“And so you are going back to the old life, Alice? And by-and-by I suppose you will marry?”

I would not advise any man, be he old or young, in case he does not think it wise or prudent to marry the woman he loves, to linger with her in the doorway of a silent farmhouse, and hold her hand, and look out upon a moonlight night. The touch of the small slight fingers was playing the mischief with my good resolutions, and my wisdom (if I had any).

“Alice,” I said, softly; and I almost started, as she did, at the sound of my own voice, it was so changed. “Alice, we have been very happy here.”

“Very.”

I took both her hands, and held them close in mine. But she would not look at me, though her face was turned that way.

“There is a great difference between us, dear Alice. I am much older than you, and much graver. I have never loved any woman but you in my life, while you have charmed a thousand hearts, and had a thousand fancies. If you were what the world thinks you, and what you try to make yourself out to be, I should say no more than this — I love you. But I know you have a heart. I know you can love, if you will; and can be true if you will. And so I beseech you to talk to me

honestly, and tell me if you can love me, or if you do. I am not used to asking such questions of ladies, Alice, and I may seem rough and rude; but believe me, when I say you have won my whole heart, and I cannot be happy without you."

"Yes, I believe you," she said.

"But do you trust me, and do you love me?"

She might trifle with a trifler, but she was earnest enough with me.

"I trust you, and I love you," she answered, frankly. "Are you wondering why I can stand before you, and speak so calmly? Because, I do not think I shall ever marry you. You do not love me, as I have always said my husband should love me. I am wayward and exacting, and I should weary your life out by my constant craving for tenderness. I was made to be petted, Frank; and you, though a loving, are not an affectionate man. You would wish me at the bottom of the Red Sea before we had been married a month; and, because you could not get me there, you would go to work and break my heart, by way of amusement. I know it as well as if I had seen it all — even now."

She looked at me, and all her woman's heart and nature were in her eyes. They spoke love and passion, and deep, deep tenderness — and all for me. Something leaped into life in my heart at that moment which I had never felt before — something that made my affection of the last few hours seem cold and dead beside its fervid glow. I had her in my arms within the instant — close — close to my heart.

"Alice! if ever man loved woman with heart and soul — madly and unreasonably if you will, but still truly and honestly — I love you, my darling."

"But will it last? O, Frank, will it last?"

I bent down, and our lips met in a long, fond kiss.

"You will be my wife, Alice?"

She leaned her pretty head against my arm, and her hand stole into mine again.

"Do you mean that for your answer? Am I to keep the hand, dear Alice, and call it mine?"

"If you will, Francis."

It was the first time she had ever given me that name. But she never called me by any other again until she ceased to love me; and it sounds sweetly in my memory now, and it will sound sweetly to my dying day.

CHAPTER III.

WE were married not long after, and for six months we dwelt in a "Fool's Paradise." When I think, that but for me, it might have lasted to our dying day, I can only sigh, and take up the burden of my life with an aching heart.

They had called Alice fickle — oh, how wrongly! No human being could be truer to another than she was to me.

"I only wanted to find my master, Francis," she used to say, when I laughed at her about it. "I was looking for him through all those long years, and I began to think he would never come. But, from the first moment when I heard you speak, and met your eyes, I felt that he was near me. And I am glad to wear my master's chains," she added, kissing my hand.

And I am sure she was in earnest. I pleased her best when I treated her most like a child. She was no angel — a passionate, high-spirited creature. She rebelled a thousand times a day, although she delighted in my control. But it was pretty to see her, when she turned to leave the room, with fire in her eyes, and a deep flush on her cheek — it was pretty to see her with her hand upon the lock even, drop her proud head submissively, and wait when I said — “Stop. Shut the door, and listen to me.” Yet it was dangerous. I, who had never been loved before, what could I do but become a tyrant, when a creature so noble as this bent down before me!

She loved me. Every chord of her most sensitive heart thrilled and trembled to my touch, and gave forth sweetest music; yet I was not satisfied. I tried the minor key. Through her deep affection for me I wounded her cruelly. I can see it now. Some wise idea found its way into my head and whispered that I was making a child of my wife by my indulgent ways, and that her character would never develop its strength in so much sunshine. I acted upon that thought, forgetting how she had already been tried in the fiery furnace of affliction; and, quite unconscious, that while she was getting back all the innocent gaiety of her childish years, the deep lessons of her womanhood were still lying beneath the sparkling surface of her playful ways.

If, for a time, she had charmed me out of my graver self, I resolved to be charmed no more. I devoted myself again to my business, heart and soul, and sat poring for hours over law papers without speaking to her. Yet she did not complain. So long as she was certain that I loved her, she was content, and took up her pen again,

and went on with the work our marriage had interrupted. Her writing-desk was in my study, by a window just opposite mine; and sometimes I would cease to hear the rapid movement of her pen, and, looking up, I would find her eyes fixed upon my face, while a happy smile was playing around her lips. One day that glance found me in a most unreasonable mood. The sense of her love half pained me, and I said curtly:

"It is bad taste, Alice, to look at anyone in that way."

She dropped her pen, only too glad of an excuse to talk to me, and came and leaned over my chair.

"And why? when I love some one."

This was a bad beginning of the lesson. I wanted to teach her, and I turned over my papers in silence.

"Do I annoy you, Francis?"

"Not much."

Her light hand was playing with my hair, and her breath was warm on my cheek. I felt my wisdom vanishing, and tried to make up for its loss by an increased coldness of manner.

"One kiss," she said. "Just one, and I'll go away."

"What nonsense, Alice. What time have I to think of kisses now?"

She stood up, and looked me in the face.

"Do I tease you, Francis?"

"Very much."

She gave a little sigh — so faint that I could scarcely hear it — and left the room. I had scared her gaiety away for that morning.

This was the first cloud in our sky.

It seems strange, now, when I look back upon it

after the lapse of years, how perseveringly I laboured to destroy the foundation of peace and happiness on which I might have built my life. The remaining six months of that year were months of misery to me, and, I doubt not, to Alice, for she grew thin and pale, and lost her gaiety. I had succeeded only too well in my plan, and she had learned to doubt my affection for her. I felt this by the look in her eyes now and then, and by the way in which she seemed to cling to her dog, as if his fidelity and love were now her only hope. But I was too proud to own myself in the wrong, and the breach widened day by day.

In the midst of all this estrangement the dog sickened. There was a week of misgiving on Alice's part, when she sat beside him with her books, or writing all the time — there was a day when both books and manuscript were put away, and she was bending over him, with her tears falling fast, as she tried to hush his moans, and looked into his fast glazing eyes — and there was an hour of stillness, when she lay on the low couch, with her arm around his neck, neither speaking nor stirring. And when the poor creature's last breath was drawn, she bent over him with a passionate burst of grief, kissed the white spot upon his forehead, and closed the soft, dark eyes, that even in death were turned towards her with a loving look.

She did not come to me for sympathy. She watched alone, while the gardener dug a grave and buried him beneath the study window. She never mentioned him to me, and never paid her daily visit to his grave till I was busy with my papers for the evening. So the year, which had begun in love and happiness, came to its close.

I sat in the study alone, one morning in the February following, looking over some deeds that had been long neglected, when I heard Alice singing in the balcony outside the window. It was the first time I had heard her sing since Fred's death, and I laid down my pen to listen. But hearing her coming through the hall, I took it up again, and affected to be very busy.

It was a warm, bright, beautiful day, and she seemed to bring a burst of sunlight and happiness with her as she opened the door. Her own face, too, was radiant, and she looked like the Alice of the old farm-house, as she came on tiptoe and bent over my chair.

"Well, what is it?" I asked, looking up.

She laid a pretty little bouquet of violets, tied with blue ribbons, before me.

"I have been to the conservatory, and have brought you the first flowers of the season, Francis. And something else, which, perhaps, you may not like so well."

She bent over me as she spoke, and leaning her hand lightly on my shoulder, kissed me twice. She had been chary of her caresses, for some time; and, when she did this of her own accord, I wheeled round in my chair, and looked up at her.

"You seem very happy to-day, Alice."

"It is somebody's birthday," she said, stationing herself upon my knee, and looking into my eyes. "And I wish somebody very many happy returns:" — her voice faltered a little — "and if there has been any wrong feeling, Francis, for the last six months, we will bury it to-day, now and for ever."

She clung to me in silence, and hid her face upon my breast. I was moved, in spite of myself, and kissed the brown hair that was scattered over my shoulder, and

said I was quite willing to forget everything (as if I had anything to forget)! At which she looked up with a bright smile, and I daresay thought me very magnanimous.

"And we will make a new beginning from this day, Francis."

"If you will, my child."

She caressed me again, after a queer little fashion of her own, which always made me smile, and which consisted of a series of kisses bestowed systematically on different parts of my face — four, I believe, being allotted to my forehead, two to each cheek, two to the chin, four to my lips, and four to my eyes. She went through this ceremony with a painstaking care, and then looked me in the face. All her love and tenderness seemed to come up before me in that moment, and efface the past and its unhappiness. I held her closely to my heart, and her arms were around my neck.

Will any one believe it? My wife had scarcely left me five moments before the fancy came to me that I had shown too plainly the power she had over me. For months I had been schooling myself into coldness and indifference, and at her very first warm kiss or smile, I was completely routed. She had vexed, and thwarted, and annoyed me much during those months: it would not do to pardon her so fully and entirely before she had even asked my forgiveness. I took a sudden resolution; and, when she came back into the room, was buried in my papers once more. Poor child! She had had one half-hour's sunshine, at least.

"One moment," she said, taking the pen out of my hand, and holding something up over my head. "I have a birthday gift for you. Do you want it?"

"If you give it to me, certainly."

"Then ask me for it."

I said nothing, but took up my pen again. Her countenance fell a little.

"Would you like it?" she said, timidly.

"There was a saint in old times," I said, quietly, going on with my papers, "a name-sake of mine, by the way — Saint Francis of Sales — who was accustomed to say, that one should never ask or refuse anything."

"Well! But I'm not talking to *Saint* Francis; I am talking to you. Will you have my little gift? Say yes — just to please me — just to make my happy day still happier."

"Don't be a child, Alice."

"It is childish, I know; but indulge me this once. It is such a little thing, and it will make me very happy."

"I shall not refuse whatever you choose to give me. Only don't delay me long, for I want to go on with these papers."

The next moment she threw the toy (a pretty little bronze inkstand made like a Cupid, with his quiver full of pens) at my feet, and turned away, grieved and angry. I stooped to pick up the figure — it was broken in two.

"Oh, you can condescend to lift it from the ground!" she said sarcastically.

"Upon my word, Alice, you are the most unreasonable of beings. However, the little god of love can be easily mended."

"Yes."

She placed the fragments one upon the other and looked at me.

"It can be mended, but the accident must leave its trace, like all others. Oh, Francis!" she added, throwing herself down by my chair, and lifting my hand to her lips. "Why do you try me so? Do you really love me?"

"Alice," I said, impatiently, "do get up. You tire me."

She rose and turned very pale.

"I will go then. But first answer my question. Do you love me, Francis?"

I felt anger and obstinacy in my heart — nothing else. Was she threatening me?

"Did you love me when you married me, Francis?"

"I did. But —"

"But you do not love me now?"

"Since you will have it," I said.

"Go on!"

"I do not love you — not as you mean."

There was a dead silence in the room as the lying words left my lips, and she grew so white, and gave me such a look of anguish that I repented of my cruelty, and forgot my anger.

"I do not mean that, Alice," I cried. "You look ill and pale. Believe me, I was only jesting."

"I can bear it, Francis. There is nothing on this earth that cannot be borne — in one way or other."

She turned and left the room, quietly and sadly. The sunshine faded just then, and only a white, pale light came through the window. I so connected it with her sorrow, that to this day I can never see the golden radiance come and go across my path, without the same sharp, knife-like pang that I felt then, as the door closed behind her.

CHAPTER IV.

ALICE became weaker and grew really ill. A tour on the continent was strongly recommended by the doctors as the likeliest means of restoration. It was impossible for me to go; but some friends of ours, one Mr. and Mrs. Warrener, with a young daughter, were going to Italy for six months, and it was arranged that Alice should accompany them.

They remained abroad, nine months instead of six. People wondered and joked about my wife's deserting me; but I only laughed, and said, I should soon go after her if she remained away much longer; and they thought we were still a model couple. But, had they seen me sitting in my office, at night, over Alice's letters from abroad, they would have known what a gulf had opened between us two. I read those letters over and over again, with aching throbs going through and through my heart, at every word. They were full of incident and interest, and people called them beautiful, who had not seen the mixture of womanly passion and childlike playfulness in her character that I had seen, and which I was to see no more.

At last she returned. I came home tired enough, one evening, to find a letter lying on my table, informing me that she would cross to Dover on the morrow. I went down to Dover to meet her. Our estrangement had worn deep into my heart. She had loved me once; she should love me again!

I was worn, haggard. I took a bath and made a careful toilet after my hurried journey. As I was taking my last look in the glass, the hotel-waiter came to tell me they had arrived.

I followed him, more nervous than I had ever been before in my life. Warrener grasped my hands as I opened the door, and Mrs. Warrener — bless her kind heart! — burst out crying.

“Oh, my dear Frank! I am so glad to see you. And we have brought you your Alice home, so well.”

Next moment she entered, a little King Charles's spaniel frisking about her feet. I had her in my arms at once, but it was not until she kissed me that I knew how cold and pale she was.

“Alice, are you ill?” I asked, holding her away from me, and looking into her face.

Her eyes met mine, but their old light was quite gone.

“Not in the least ill, Frank,” she said quietly. “But you must remember I have not seen you for nine months and you startled me a little.”

My household fairy had fled, and I could only mourn that I should never look upon her sweet, young face again. It was another Alice, this. I had slain my own Alice, and nothing could reanimate her.

I was like one in a dream all through the day; and, when we came home, I could not wake. I had made many changes in the house, and all for her. I took her through the rooms on the day after our return, and showed her the improvements. She was pleased with the furniture; she admired the pictures and the conservatory; and seemed delighted with the little gem of a boudoir which I had pleased myself by designing expressly for her. She thanked me, too. No longer ago than a year, she would have danced through the rooms, uttering a thousand pretty little exclamations of wonder and delight, and I should have been smothered with

kisses, and called a "dear old bear," or some such fit name at the end; all of which would have been very silly, but also very delightful.

I think I bore it for a month; but one morning, as I sat at my solitary breakfast — for Alice took that meal in her room now — the bitter sense of wrong and unhappiness and desertion came over me so strongly that I went up to her room.

"Are you busy?" I asked, as she laid down her pen and looked around.

"Not too busy to talk to you," she said.

"Alice, how long are we to live this life?"

She changed colour.

"What life, Frank?"

"The one we are living now. It is not the happy, loving life we used to live. You are not mine as entirely and lovingly as you once were."

"I know it." And she sighed and looked drearily at me.

"Why cannot the old days come back again. If I made a terrible mistake, can you never forgive it? I thought it was foolish for us to love each other as we did — at least, to show it as we did — but I have found now, that love is earth's only true wisdom."

She smiled sadly.

"Give me back that love, Alice, which I would not have. Oh, give me back the lost sunshine."

I rose from my seat and stood beside her, but she drew back and shook her head.

"Frank, don't ask me for that."

"I shall know how to value it now, Alice."

"That may be; but I have it not to give you, my poor Frank."

I clasped her to my heart. The passion in that heart might almost have brought back life to the dead; but she did not move. She was like a statue in my arms, and only looked at me and sighed.

"Too late! Too late, Frank!"

"Will you never forgive me?"

"Forgive? Do you think I have one unkind thought or feeling towards you, Frank? Ah, no! But I am chilled through and through. My love is dead and buried. Stand away from its grave, and let us meet the world as we best may."

I leaned my head upon my hands, and my tears fell, and I was not ashamed of them. But they seemed to rouse her into a kind of frenzy.

"You?" she exclaimed suddenly. "You, who a year ago sowed the seed which has borne this fruit, can you weep over your husbandry now? Don't, Frank! Take what I can give you — take my earnest friendship — and God grant we may never part, here or in heaven."

"Ah! in heaven — if we ever get there — you will love me again."

She quoted those sad words which poor St. Pierre uttered on his dying bed:

"Que ferait une âme isolée dans le ciel même?"

(What would an isolated soul do, even in Heaven itself!)

and laid her hand gently on mine.

"Heaven knows, dear Alice, that as I loved you when we first met, I loved you on that unhappy day, and love you still!"

"I am glad to hear it," she said hurriedly. "Heaven only knows what days and nights were mine at first. For my life had been wrapped up in yours, Frank, and

it was terrible to separate them. I thought at first that I could not live. I suppose every one thinks so, when a heavy blow falls. But strength was given me, and by-and-by, peace. We seem like two grey shadows, Frank, in a silent world, and we must only wait God's time; and hope that, on the other side of the grave at least, this great mistake may be set right. Believe me, I am happy in being with you, Frank — happy in thinking that the same roof shelters us, and that we shall not part till one of us two dies."

I opened my arms, and, of her own accord, she came to my heart once more; her arms were around my neck, and her head upon my shoulder, and her lips meeting mine. Not as they used to do, yet tenderly and kindly.

"We are older and wiser than we were, and sadder, too, dear Frank," she said with a smile. "Yet who knows? It may be that all the love has not left us yet."

And thus that chapter of our life ended.

We have never touched upon the subject since; but I have waited calmly for years, and the same quiet light shines always in the eyes of Alice; the same deep, sad tone thrills my heart when I hear her speaking or singing. An angel could scarcely be gentler or kinder than she who was once so impetuous and full of fire. She was unreasonable and exacting and ardent and imperious in those days, I know, and my slower nature was always on the strain to keep pace with hers; but, what a bright, joyous, happy creature she was!

It would have been different but for me. O you, who read this little tale, remember in time that a kind word and a loving look cost little, although they do such great work; and that there is no wrong so deep as wrong done to a loving heart.

THE BALCOMBE STREET MYSTERY.

I.

SOME thirty or forty years since, there used to be a great house, at the corner of a hilly street, in that day known by the name of Balcombe Street. It may be doubted if any one could find Balcombe Street now. Most likely, the commissioners have long ago come down in that direction, and quietly put Balcombe Street out of the world. Oldest inhabitants used to tell how it had once been a fashionable neighbourhood, and there were dusky traditions of a Chief Justice, great counsellors, and other men of law, having rather fancied the quarter, it being within an easy walk of Chancery-lane. But these legal glories had long departed. Dilapidation was quietly eating its way down the street: down to the tall mansion at the corner.

For that matter — showing as yet no signs of outward corruption — it was a very imposing structure indeed, and in the days of its legal jubilee must have been glorified by the presence of the defunct chief justice. It was known disparagingly as Maldon's Folly, though nobody seemed to be aware who Maldon was, or where his foolishness had broken out. Very likely the folly had never been paid for, or perhaps Maldon had paid for it, and been broken in consequence, or had been

taken in execution, or otherwise legally inconvenienced. Whatever might have been the secret, the neighbours had always accepted Maldon's Folly as it stood, and asked no questions. It was still a handsome, well-saved edifice, with a high, cavernous porch, and abundance of florid iron railing, twisted fancifully in the old French fashion. Standing under the shadow of that portico, having heard the great knocker sound hollowly, strange influences as of ghostly dinner parties, of heavy legal merriment and sound judicial port, came floating forth from within. Dark and dispiriting was the atmosphere of the entrance-hall, light from the church window over the landing falling dimly on the great polished knobs and thick twisted pillars which formed the balustrade of the broad staircase. Over-head there were vast chambers of reception, where the deceased chief justice had doubtless sat, and held his levées, and been waited on obsequiously by men learned in the law. This might have been in the awful front room, which was garnished with huge immoveable structures, in the shape of toppling cabinets and creaking pillar and claw tables, which it would take the strength of many men to stir.

There lived in the old house in Balcombe Street a family, that was, to a certain degree, in keeping with the tenement; a lonely family that kept to itself; that saw but few people, and that were written down by neighbours as odd and queer. Those who knew them could say no more than this; — that they were a cold, sapless, incomprehensible race, from whom all the kindest juices of human nature had been dried out. Who knows but that, living in such a dark, dismal atmosphere, might account for much of these strange ways: perhaps, too, the having come of a strange stock (the grandfather being

an eccentric who shunned his fellows, and wore his clothes to rags, and kept on a cocked hat in the house) had something more to do with their self-contained dryness. This grandfather had given up his soul in the chief justice's rooms, and the cocked hat was lying still in the drawer of a black oak wardrobe, that fronted the mausoleum bed, just in the same manner as Mr. Collier Lyttleton, the grandson, inhaled law all night long, in the dun room underneath. Yes, there was the dun room exactly underneath: and one round of the well staircase left you at the door of the chief justice's apartment. It was a terrible shaft, sunk clean through the house; through which those who stood in the hall looked up at the sky-light in the roof, as from the bottom of a coal-pit. And, at the foot of the well staircase was this dun room, where Mr. Lyttleton, the unemployed barrister, was grinding down his brain against the hard, cold, stony law. Every morning, from five until nine, he was holding his brain to that gritty-wheel; then lifted his head for a space while he walked to chambers, kept it there well down the whole day until dinner; and, from that time out again until midnight: all which cruel grinding left him, still Mr. Lyttleton, the unemployed: left him besides a tall-stooped, delicate-looking being, with a cold white smile, and thirty-six years of his life gone by. With that cold white smile, however, and a strange, defiant power in his breast, he had struggled on ever since that night when the grandfather had expired with the cocked hat on his head; all which season — a season six years long — he had been fighting off poverty; fighting, too, in a cruel, wearing, grinding, domestic war.

For there was a Mrs. Daxe who lived in the old house, too, and had a room, off the well-staircase. She

was a younger sister of that defunct grandsire, a woman, say, of some seventy years old, but strong and full of life, and furnished with a terrible tongue; reviling all things. The gloomy house was hers. It had been left to her by will, — hers whatever money there passed out into the world from that gloomy place. Whatever little moneys the unemployed could gather in might go in part to household expenses, fined down to starvation point, and she would make up the balance. She was own sister to the departed miser, and neighbours said to neighbours that she must have chests of gold and silver — huge iron-bound, crammed chests — lying hidden up and down. What else, indeed, could be the significance of the black carved corner cup-boards; and the vast garde-robes, blacker still, and the pigeon holes, and the heavy oak case, each on its four twisted legs; to say nothing of traps where the legs of the bed-stead came? Aye, indeed; but, with thus serving out subsistence to the rest, she had back interest for her money, usurious cent. per cent., compound interest.

All in that matter of reviling, coming down the well staircase to revile, bursting in periodically to the dun room with reviling purport, and making him lift his brain from that grindstone to hear her, — passing from him to the other Being that lived there, and on her means. Such surprising interest as she had for her money! That other being was Mary Lyttleton, sister to Mr. Lyttleton; who was cold as he was; like him in mind, too, only that with her there was no such thing as Hope; for Hope had long since been driven out of her: ever since, indeed, the day she came under the shadow of that roof, having arrived from a fresh country place, from sweetly-smelling hay and sweeter gardens,

full of flowers, in which company she had lived all her life, to be imprisoned henceforth and for aye in gaol and dismal reformatory. So, from the very first, as has been said, she had cast Hope away from her, almost as soon as the bolt had been shot behind her; and went through her round of duties in a dull, impassive way. She took her share of the reviling with the rest, accepting it with a sort of welcome. It was wonderful to see how Mrs. Daxe throve upon reviling; drawing from it life, and strength, and vigour; in other words, surprising interest for the money.

She came down one evening to the door of the unemployed's room, and stood outside listening to the grindstone. It was whirring round briskly; particles of brain flying off in sparkles. Case! case! case! statute, point, dictum, precedent and principle! She was come down, having a weary moment on hand, to work an old lever, to rasp him with a favourite grater. The grater was no other than this; — a very good friend had, on the grandfather's death, proffered to the unemployed a place at a desk (mercantile) of the value of two hundred pounds yearly, which offer the barrister had almost scorned — had declined, certainly — from desperate assurance of his own powers, and wild confidence in the walk he had chosen. Better starvation than a desk; welcome consumptive chest and eternal grindstone rather! For this election, however, was to come terrible reckoning; she who furnished him with bread and meat and drink shrieking at him ceaselessly that one upbraiding cry of "Jordan's Place! Jordan's Place! Why did you refuse Jordan's Place?" Shooting it through the tympanum of his ear into his brain, until that cry came to sound in his ears in the middle of nights; waking him from weary

dreams. It was astonishing how she worked on him with that grater. The grindstone was torture most sweet and acceptable after it.

On this evening she had come down with the grater newly roughed and whetted; and, with that, another instrument which might come hereafter to be of the same profit. There was a dim candle burning, which was wasting the eyesight of him who read; but it was Mrs. Martha Daxe who furnished it; so there was no reasonable ground of complaint.

"Well!" said Martha Daxe, striding in with that strong, youthful stride of hers; "Suck! suck away! suck it all in! suck away until the day of judgment, and see what good it will do us. You addle-headed fool, do you mind me?"

Mr. Lyttleton had lifted his brain carefully from off the grindstone, and laid his finger on the particular clause of the act of parliament he was grinding his brain upon, to mark it.

"Do ye mind me?" Grandaunt Daxe continued in a shriek. "When are ye to get me money? Who is to pay me for my keep of you? When are you to stop this plundering of me? Answer me!"

She pulled away the statutes at large, and the clause in question from under his finger.

"Soon," he said, quite undisturbed; "soon, I am confident. It will all come in a short time."

"How long have you been telling me that story?" she answered. "Beggar that you now and always will be, full of impostor's promises, when are you to have money, I say again?"

"Soon, I am confident, as I told you before."

"Ah-r-r! the same old whining story! Why didn't

you take Jordan's place? Not a bit sorry for it now: not a bit sorry; not a bit!"

"No," said Mr. Lyttleton quite calmly. "It was the wisest step I ever took in my life."

"O hear him, the beggar! Why don't I turn these paupers into the street?" She would not have done it for a hundred pounds. But there was that second grater ready now, and waiting to be used. "No," she said, fetching it up; "but I must get my house fuller of them — have more on my hands. Two girls here next week, pauper cousins of your own; that beggar uncle must needs die and leave them without a penny."

A little tinge came for an instant into the barrister's cheek. There had been days once in his life when cousins had come together in that country life, gathering flowers and inhaling that freshly-mown hay together. Cousins, pauper or otherwise, wandering over the green meadows, long, long before that grinding had begun.

"Are you going to have them to live with you?" he said, after a pause. "Conalöre and Prue?"

"Ay!" Martha Daxe answered; "and a pretty work-house full we shall have of it then. But I shall take it out of them. O my! if I won't take it out of them!"

She strode up and down the room, saying that over and over again, Mr. Lyttleton regarding her patiently.

"Look at my money!" she said, stopping suddenly before a row of some half-dozen law books; "see how I am swindled! When will you pay me, I say, for your keep and lodging? When will you give me my money?"

"You will have it one day; I am confident of it as I sit here a living man; so give me peace till then."

"The old sing-song," she said, putting by the grater, "the old trumpery tune."

And with that she turned away, and strode up the well-staircase again. Much invigorated was she by that short interview. It was as good as an elixir to her, and that prospect of two more shortly to arrive, who would take their share of bitter tonguing, was specially comforting. Why, taking it in this view, they were only a wretched, beggarly curate's daughters (so she put it as she went up the stairs), who, at best, were fit only for tramping the streets (so also she put it), they might think themselves too well off, the low jades!"

"Hi, Ben! Ben Alibone!" she called out down the well-staircase, leaning on her elbows. She had to call twice for that matter, and then a thick-set, burly man, with a squint, and in his shirt sleeves, came out of a cabin door, and stood looking up from the bottom.

"Well!" he said.

"Did you hear me call to you?" she asked.

"I couldn't come sooner," he answered, bluntly. "What do you want now? You always think you can take your time with me; but I won't stand it! What do you want now, I say again?" he answered, leaning himself against the last balustrade; "unless you are minded to begin a-bullying of me."

"Ah-r-r you!" she said, shaking her hand at him.

"Ah-r-r yourself!" he retorted, turning on his heel in through the dark cabin door.

He knew she had no real business with him beyond that mere pastime of bullying, and so went in without a word more. She had her interest out of Ben Alibone's wages, too. He stood up to her, as he himself put it, and gave as good as he got. Such a horrid squint as the man had!

II.

BUT the two low jades, Curate Rhode's daughters — who were to arrive presently in the mean cab, with an old hair trunk on top — it did seem a hard thing that they should be brought in to leech on old Martha Daxe. Hard, certainly, that she should have that bequest of two fair pieces of flesh, born of sixty pounds a year, and with no inheritance beyond the old hair trunk! When, three days after, the mean cab came up and set down the two paupers, there was a certain commotion among neighbours. "Bolt the door behind you, Ben Alibone," was their first greeting: and they passed in, to the music of the rattling of chains. Martha Daxe, half-way up the well-staircase, gave them ogre's welcome; interest was to accrue from that moment.

One was what (had she an eye to such things) she would have called a presentable wench. That was Conalore. A tall creature, gracefully shaped, and made to be loved; whose hair ran round her head in ripples and was gathered at the back, like a Greek statue's. A girl formed for the bright, open country, for the fields and mountains; but not for the gaol (Alibone, gaoler) into which she was entering. In truth, she was not one to play Picciola or Prison Flower, unless with foreknowledge of there being some gentle hand to tend her, and let the sun in upon her, and keep her from withering away in the gaol. Picciola and the unemployed had been together before that, in those sunshiny haymaking days, when there were lighter things to think of than pure brain-grinding. That was Conalore.

But there was another — the sister — Prue, the quiet child. The quiet child was a different order of

creature; very small, and with pale eyes, that blinked. A sharp, pretty thing, with hair tinted reddishly, and running in a ripple, like her sister's. But if the stately sister was as a Grecian statue, here was the little old woman that lived in a shoe. Not dwarfish; but perhaps sharp as a needle, perhaps cunning as a she-fox. Quiet child Prue could read a situation and its contingent shapes for months forward, about as well as your generals forecast their campaigns, which, as they do ill enough sometimes, it had best be said; as well as that ingenious master carries three chess games in his head all at once. She bore all her wits about her, did Prue Rhode, the quiet child.

They came in on that arrival day, and the first words Prue spoke, whispering her sister, were, "Hi, for the bastille! Hi, for the twopenitentiary women!" To whom Martha Daxe, as has been said, gave ogre's greeting, glancing on her well-staircase. She even fondled them over, taking Conalore about the waist, to feel what stamina there was in her; from which embrace the poor statue took a little comfort, though the gaol had already done its work upon her.

"Come this way," Martha Daxe said, opening the door of the dun room. "See your cousin in his workshop where he makes all the money!"

The unemployed raised his head wearily, and took them all in, with a feeble stare. The whir of the grindstone was still in his ears.

"O, cousin Lyttleton!" Conalore said, running forward to him, "what has changed you so? You are killing yourself!"

Time was — in those country days — when he would have coloured up and felt his pulse beat the quicker at such a greeting. But of late there had grown up in that region where his heart used to beat, a yellow

parchment bundle, of the same shape, bound through and through with red tape cartilages. So he stood up quite impassive and bloodless.

Prue, who had been blinking curiously at him all this while, now says abruptly; "So, here it is where all the money is made. How much now? Sackfuls?"

Grandaunt Daxe chuckles delightedly. "It is perfect coining, dears," she says. "There he sits and works, and keeps us all in meat, drink, and clothing."

"I thought so; cousin Lyttleton was always held so clever," Prue answers, reflectively. "He will give us all fortunes when we are married."

Conalore's gentle eyes were bent on him tearfully, as he winced and shrunk away from these words.

"Dearest cousin," she said, "think more of your own precious health and strength, which you are only destroying. What is money, compared to life?"

"Hear, madam!" says Martha Daxe; "only hear madam, and her fine speeches! Favour us, ma'am, with the name of the last new novel! Butter your bread, ma'am, with those fine sayings; and, for that matter, his too! Come away! Come up, and leave the gentleman."

And with that she took them away up the well-staircase, round through her dismal chambers, railing all the while, until she had left their hearts as heavy as they could well be. Before night she had gotten out of Conalore at least a month's interest in advance.

With three months' sojourn in the House of Correction, they had fallen quite into the penitentiary ways; taking penitentiary diet, penitentiary discipline, and penitentiary tongue-scourging from the matron of the house, who throve and fattened on it: but they went about as two broken Magdalenes, under process of being

reformed. Which likeness refers mainly to Conalore; and had that fine, wavy hair of hers been clipped close, she would have touched that original even closer.

All which time, however, it went pretty much the same with the overworked: with this addition, that by laying his eyes close, of nights, to such wretched light as was served out to him, they grew to be strained and weak. Of which he made small account; but worked on desperately — hopelessly and against all hope. Nothing coming, likely to come. Wear out brain and eyes. Wear out nerves and life: nothing coming or likely to come. Weariest round from the gaol to chambers, from chambers back again, all to the same tune. Nothing coming.

III.

WHICHELO'S Trusts was about as well known in the Courts as any of the leading cases. Whichelo the uncle had been dishonest trustee, and Whichelo minors, whom he had defrauded, were now two threadbare old gentlemen, who had gone through life striving idly to close their fingers upon Justice, and take hold of her. But as these were the fine old times when Replication, Rejoinder, Rebutter, and Surrebutter, with other such company, throve and batten on suitors — the threadbare gentlemen had been kept off (and on, too), from minority to majority, and from that to old age. Trustee Whichelo was fat and opulent, and rather fancied the thing would last out his own time. Many tried their hands at Whichelo's Trusts, with about the same profit. Nothing could be made of it, such power had Surrebutter and his brethren. Until at last, solicitor in the matter, sickening of his speculation, told the threadbare gentle-

men that he must have done with it and them, unless indeed they could turn up some poor hardworking devil of a drudge who would work the thing for pure nothing, and chance of a reputation. Not so long after then, the two threadbare gentlemen came one morning to Balcombe Street, and there found such a drudge, who took the business with a sort of joy and eager hope. No remuneration, but better full hands than idle expectancy. "We shall send you up the papers in the evening," said the threadbare gentlemen at departing. And accordingly, that evening there came up a cab, filled with old carpet-bags and bundles, in which again were reams of old yellow dried parchments, being the papers in the matter, or Sur-rebutter and his fellows come on a visit.

IV.

THERE was some one living at the top of the house, in a dark nook which she had christened queerly Ravens' Roost; and here, after taking her day's share of railing, she would retire and write in a log or day-book. It was the log of the quiet child, kept fast under lock and key, who looked to all things shrewdly, but with an especial eye to the dun chamber. What she wrote was all to the same tune and sing-song.

"I hate, I hate," began the log every day, dating from Ravens' Roost, "and I like to hate. It will keep me alive, while undergoing penal servitude, until I turn old and grey, and he run stone blind, which he will as sure as he will die — poor, wretched, noble, hateful creature! I should like to have the leading of him about, though I know he would rather fancy Minx Conalore. Minx Conalore would lead him so gingerly! O the poor, poor soul: pray, pray that his eyes be kept to him!"

V.

THE papers in the matter of Whichelo's Trusts were spread out before him at night, covering the tables, and the floor, and old cabinets. They looked down at him from tops of cupboards, waiting their turn. They were tied up, as it were, with miles of red tape; and such as were written out on great paper folios, each furnished with a substantial vellum jacket. There were some made up like small linen bales, and weighing many, many pounds. Surprising, indeed, what a sum the whole would have brought in if put up to auction as waste paper! By the light of a miserable candle he was now working through a vast prairie; which was no other than the great deed of trust itself, sweetly engrossed, wherein were numberless other deeds recited and referred to. And as he bent his head close to the prairie and moved the light nearer, he felt his eyes sink in from weakness, as though about to be shut for ever. Two burning arrows were piercing into his brain, and he fell back in his chair, covering up his face. "O, I must give up," he said aloud. "I cannot go on. It is only left for me to become blind. And, after that, mad. Fitting end to all!" Again he bent forward his head to the dim light and entered on the prairie; but with the same profit. "This is terrible," he said aloud. "If I had only some help on which to lean: some one to do the hodman's work, and make abstracts, and so spare these eyes!" He thought for a moment, and went on. "Conalore has turned proud of late. She has scorn for such mean creatures as I. A just scorn. I am a mean, poor-souled drudge, nothing else. O, everything is weariness: everything!"

There was some one listening at the door: some one that had come down on tiptoe: past the chief justice's room, down all the way from the Ravens' Roost. The well-staircase had not given so much as a creak: for she was light of person, and lighter of foot. Some one had heard all those out-spoken words, and had gone away softly but with secret rejoicing.

When he was gone to chambers next day she came down again from the Ravens' Roost, and stole privately into the dun room. She stood solitary among the papers of the great cause, or what might be rather called the dried bones of it. The room was as a vault full of those dried bones, lying here and there, and up and down. Prue had strange powers of thought, the clearest of heads; brain machinery that could winnow law, or even coarser material. After all, this should not be such terrible caviare to the crowd. Suitors, if they were let, or were a degree less lazy, might walk in the steps of their own cause, conveniently enough. Those deeds, awful of aspect, are not altogether palimpsests.

So Prue Rhode drew near to the mummy-in-chief, lying out on the table, and set herself resolutely to it. She was now entering on the prairie with terrible impediment, at first, by brush and brake, and jungle, impenetrable. It seemed all Hebrew, Chaldaic, Sanscrit moulded together. She turned it over from front to back. Heavy enough it was. There was engrossed invoice of deeds alluded to within. Conveyance A of the year seventeen hundred and sixty, conveyance B of the year seventeen hundred and ninety-seven, and the rest, which documents must, in all likelihood, be hard by, and true enough. Here they were to the right, all tied up together. Here was conveyance of seventeen hun-

dred and sixty, marked A at the top. There were the steps in the cause on the left, masters rulings and the like, of prodigious length. Taking up which, she proceeded to make her way through without much hardship, working on for some two hours or so, and then wrote out short compendium or abstract. Then she went away for a turn or so of railing with Martha Daxe, then stole back and did more work.

When, then, at the close of the October day, Lytleton came in to begin his weary night's round; there was a strange surprise waiting him. The poor man's candle, which he would have sought presently to light, was gone, and there was a tall, bright, French lamp, shining radiantly. Great miracle this that quite dazed him with wonder and almost alarm. This fearful extravagance should Martha Daxe come to know it! But, in real earnest, how had the quiet child contrived it? She, whose income was not altogether three farthings per annum? Perhaps she had begged or borrowed, perhaps sold; perhaps — but such things should not be lightly spoken — she had been prying curiously among the nooks and pigeon-holes, and queer cabinets in old Martha Daxe's room. O the neighbours! how they talked and whispered concerning the sackfulls left by old Daxe; all stowed away in strange crannies. Greater surprise still for the overworked, when the genial light shows him the abstracts in female hand, so neatly tied up on the desk, correctly done too, and of real assistance.

Some one at the door hears him muttering to himself in astonishment, and enters softly, just as he says aloud, "Gentle Conalore, after all — her work!"

"Pah!" impatiently answers Prue, "never before so

wrong! She is a great lady; too lofty to think of helping or leading about poor blind men!"

"True, true," he said, "I should have thought of that. And was it you, dearest Prue, that did all this?"

"Who else? not Grandaunt Daxe, certainly; no, nor Ben Alibone. Show me more to do. I will be your clerk."

"Dear, dearest child," he said, "what infinite goodness, charity rather! O you could help me so!"

From that out she did help him wonderfully; but still his eyesight ebbed away slowly and surely. It came at last to this, that he could not so much as look at paper of nights. No profit, therefore, in the French lamp. But the quiet child held by him, steadily working for him, while Conalore looked on scornfully, for the pair had conceived justly of her. And yet the scent of those country days was not gone — nay, was stronger rather.

Says Prue one night, looking up from a huge deed: "Do you like me as well as Conalore, Cousin Lyttleton?"

"What of Conalore!" he said, absently. "I scarcely see her at all now. I am too mean a soul for her to think of —"

"Do you like me as well?" Prue asked again; but could get no better answer from him. Minx Conalore was, all the while, secretly thinking what great things she was made for, if she could only get loose upon the world. Blind wigmen were not her game.

But our poor blind wigman, for all the help he was getting, was only turning blinder every hour. Daylight work even, was no ease to him. It was a case of such tremendous proportions: a Leviathan, enough to swallow

the brains of ten strong men. So it was, every day, proving more and more too much for him.

The threadbare gentleman came now and again to him, and found business backward. The solicitor in the matter came, too, and said that, at this rate of pottering, they would be twenty years over it. Still he held on contending desperately with optic nerve and retina. Which pair were destined to have it their own way, as they always must. One year's rigid forbearance from all written and printed paper, would be only basis for a cure. Fretfully, chafingly he took the trial; at times bursting into fits of storm and fury quite strange to his quiet nature, startling that volunteer clerk of his, who sat working with him to the last.

Clerk Prue, not reckoning on this odd mood, says, looking up at him, "Do I work enough, Cousin. Drive me on faster, if you will."

"Small profit," he answered, bitterly, "were you to work those willing fingers to the bone!"

"Courage, friend," she said, cheerfully, "we must work through it. We shall coin a portion for your wife out of Whichelo's trusts!"

He laughed.

"Most idle talk," he said, almost rudely, "Why do you say such things? Who would think of the blind? They have all the same souls as our stately mistress, upstairs. But I can tell you, Prue, for all that, she might not get the blind back to her again, not if she went on her knees. Don't you know," he went on with kindling eyes, "don't you know that if I had coffers, and sacks of money, and jewels — some of those black oak coffers that we know of — and came freighted with these, it would be a very different tune?"

"This is intolerable," clerk Prue said, flinging down her pen, "I'll write no more for you. Your head is always running on Conalore, and I tell you she despises you. Now find out who really loves you!"

"You, I suppose," he says with a sneer, "you want wages for your work!"

"A generous taunt," the quiet child answers, trembling with rage, "now that you have no further use for me. Finish all as you may, now. I have done with you!"

"Forgive me! forgive me, dearest Prue!" he said, stopping her. "But my heart is sore. I am as fretful as a child:" and with that she stayed and took up her pen readily enough. But it came to the one finale nevertheless. Retina and optic nerve were to win easily. The overworked must lay down his arms. With tribulation, with inexpressible woe of soul, with a sickness on him like that of death, poor wigman gives in. And so, one of those October mornings, the mean cab comes up to the door again, and all the tawny papers in the matter are put in, under the seat, over the seat; the boxes outside with coachman, all to a reviling tune from the threadbare gentlemen, who swear that they have been used scurvily. So drives off the mean cab; and, with it, hope, peace, happiness. Rather has driven up with it, Despair, and another gentleman named Felodese or Suicide, both sitting together inside.

Martha Daxe from the window of the chief justice's room (for she had moved down to that apartment long since) had seen that arrival and departure. For that matter, she had known what was coming for a long while back; but had kept her rage (this time real and unaffected) bottled down close, until this day. She had

all along fancied that something might have come of the great suit: that it would have brought money clinking in upon those other moneys lying in the iron-bound, crammed coffers. How she raved and lashed herself as she walked to and fro in the chief justice's room. "He shall go into the streets. He shall. I'll fatten no paupers. He may go to his own workhouse or hospital — anywhere out of this; the idle, profitless fool!"

So, towards five o'clock on that evening, she came tramping down to the dun room to have it all out, and to vent her bottled-up fury. There was a terrible storm and contention! Fiercest wrangle! For the overworked, now grown defiant and desperate, bearded the old reviler openly. There was word for word, epithet for epithet: strife most unseeming. The door was open wide, the sounds floated out into the hall and up the well-staircase to where Prue and Conalore were listening, each at her own door. Gaunt Alibone was listening too, standing cautiously at the dark end of the hall. Great scandal for all the house. But he must tramp. That was the end of it. He may rot in the street if he like; but must turn out. Blind beggar, she called him. Beg he should, and that from to-morrow morning.

Now it had come to the darkness of night, and dark it was to the poor pauper sitting loneliness in the dun chamber, and thinking what was to become of him. The gentleman, Felo-de-se, who had called in the morning, and was not yet gone away, importuned him sadly. But to no purpose. Still, despair has a clutch upon his heart, and is working wearily at his brain. For there is disappointment, a blighting of those certain hopes, with such comforts to keep him company. Famous company they are, and are sitting with him even when the so-

norous bell of the old hall-clock chimes out eleven and three-quarters.

By this hour Martha Daxe is fast asleep in the chief justice's room, with those ancient coffers filled up to their lids with money, and double-locked down; the keys under her pillow.

VI.

THE well-staircase is dark enough, but not so dark to one who knows the way, the old clock-bell just then chiming midnight. Who should be on the well-staircase at that hour, stepping softly past the chief justice's room, but such as had fitting business, or were troubled in mind concerning the state of near relations? Ancient ladies, well stricken in years, bearing infirmities, are subject to Heaven knows what sudden ills and paralytic turns. A sharp cry for aid at dead of night might well reach through the thick floors and panellings of the old house down to the dun room, and bring up whomsoever was keeping vigil there. Yet folk cry out often in their sleep.

As he was coming forth softly from the chief justice's chamber, he came suddenly on Prue, shading a candle with her hand. She startled him exceedingly; and no wonder.

"Did you not hear anything?" she asked.

"It was nothing," he whispered. "Nothing in the world. She is sleeping soundly. Don't go in, or you will disturb her. Good night."

He was going down when she stopped him; laying her candle on the broad balustrade.

"Let us talk a moment. So, you are going to-mor-

row: turned out of doors O, that I could go too! for I am sick of her. Let me go with you. I can be your scribe: your handmaiden — anything!”

“What folly you talk,” he said, roughly. “I must go out by myself: go where no one shall think of me. I want no scribes nor handmaidens. Let me pass!” and he stole down again to his dun chamber. She looked after him in astonishment.

“Cold-hearted wretch!” she said to herself. “Let him get stone-blind, for all it is to me. But what can have put him in this mood to-night?”

She thought for a moment: then she went up-stairs, still conning it over to herself. At her own door she put out the light; and, taking off her slippers, stole down again cautiously to the door of the chief justice’s room. There she listened.

VII.

MRS. MARTHA DAXE was old; and, from her habit of body, might have been clearly set down as a fit subject for apoplexy. That was the way in which the neighbouring apothecary accounted for it. Got a fit in the night, and died without a struggle. There was the whole of it. The thing occurs every day. And so, sir, there is your fee; and let us have the funeral over as soon as decency will permit.

Prue told Lyttleton she must speak with him privately. She did so. She had a queer smile on her face, as she closed the door after her. No begging now, to be allowed to serve as handmaiden or scribe. More likely the other was to be changed into her bondman for ever. That is, as long as he should live. Alibone, the man,

was surly, and went about distrustfully, muttering strange things. But he was sent away soon; being paid handsomely, with a considerable bonus over and above his wages.

Should we please now to take that whole piece: scenery, actors, all, at intervals of say five years time, and then look out from the boxes at the stage, it will be found that Clerk Prue has wedded the broken, restless, fiery-eyed man, who was once a lawyer; but who has given up that trade since he came into a fortune. He is very quiet and submissive to her; for he knows she has a terrible scourge for him locked up in a private place; which, to give her full justice, she never brings out. For she loves him well, and does not let her sister Conalore live with her. O, who shall unravel the mystery of that October night! It must wait the great unravelling day? Pity that those who said Martha's ghost walked the old house, did not stop and question her. Yes, it must wait the great unravelling day.

The old walls may not speak now, for they have been knocked down long ago, and there is a new establishment of baths and washhouses standing in their stead.

THE SIX GIANTS OF LEHON.

ONE of the prettiest and most romantic rivers of France — the Rance — has been deprived of many of its natural beauties, by the modern improvement of canalisation. What it has gained in usefulness, it has lost in attraction. It is more serviceable to the trader, but less interesting to the tourist. A Rhine in miniature it can boast, like that celebrated stream, of having steep, rocky banks, covered in some places with the ruins of fortresses and castellated dwellings, where petty tyrants, in their day, were the lords of land and stream, and had the power, which they too often exercised, of oppressing their vassals, and spoliating the peaceful traveller. To thickly-wooded acclivities and toppling towers overhanging the Rance, there still clings many a wild tale, and many a wondrous legend. Such a legend I picked up one day, whilst sauntering near the old bridge of the secluded village of Lehon, which lies at the bottom of a valley, enclosed with an amphitheatre of precipitous hills.

As I approached the bridge, I observed a man sitting straddle-legs on the central wooden parapet. This man wore the short, loose, blue blouse of the peasantry. His lower limbs were encased in light-coloured cord knee-breeches, and yellow gaiters. His wide-awake, broad-leaved Breton hat was cocked upon one side of his

head, in a manner which, as I conceived, was indicative of the foreigner; and, as I went nearer, and discerned that between his lips he held a black pipe, not an inch long, I felt that I might, despite the place in which he was encountered, and the habiliments that disguised his nationality, claim him as a fellow subject.

There was, however, a circumstance calculated to shake my confidence as to my surmise, with respect to the particular country of the blue-bloused peasant, and that was observing him in friendly conversation with a white-bearded old man, who was, in face, figure, and manner, undoubtedly a Frenchman.

Before I reached the bridge, the old man had passed from his companion, leaving the latter busily engaged, cutting into the palm of his left hand thin slivers of tobacco, and as he did so, consoling himself in his solitary occupation with the doleful words of a melancholy ditty addressed to Marie Louisa upon the death of Napoleon I. Of that ditty, I could, as I approached, hear the following words recited:

“She may sigh by the winds on the great Mount Hyana,
While her hero yet sleeps in the isle of Saint Helana.”

“You are not a Frenchman,” I remarked.

“No — nor an Englishman, either, thank God!” was the reply.

“Do you speak French?” I asked.

“Why, I speak it, sir, in that sort of a way, that if you asked me the same question in French, I’d say I couldn’t answer you.”

“And yet I observed you speaking to that old man who has just parted from you?”

“Oh! that is old Bazan, the beadle of the church

behind me. I find it as easy speaking to him as to you, sir."

"Then he is not a Frenchman."

"Then, if he is not a Frenchman, he must have dropped from the skies into Lehon; for he never was ten miles from this bridge, from the day he was born to the present hour. If living eighty-four years in one place, and that place in France, and never being out of it, does not make a man a Frenchman, I don't well know what other country you can say he belongs to. At all events, old Bazan says he is a Frenchman, and I am disposed to believe him."

"Well!" I observed, somewhat puzzled by the self-possessed Irishman, "if you cannot speak French very well, — and yet you can talk with facility to Monsieur Bazan, — I suppose he speaks English?"

"He speak English!" cried the Irishman, laughing. "Old Bazan speak English! He hates the very name of the English; he would as soon think of eating meat on a Friday as talking one word of English."

"Then how," I asked, "do you keep up a conversation with each other?"

"How do we keep up a conversation with each other?" repeated the Irishman. "Pray, sir, how do you and I keep up a conversation?"

"By speaking the same language?" I answered.

"Very well, sir; that is the way Bazan and I keep up a conversation with each other; we speak the same language."

"The same language! what do you mean? I thought you said he did not speak English; and you do not speak French."

"And if you always think as correctly on all occa-

sions, sir," coolly remarked the Irishman, "as you do at present, make your mind easy for the rest of your life; for you will never fall into a mistake. Bazan does not speak English: I do not speak French, and yet we both speak the same language."

"What language?" I asked.

"What language!" repeated the Irishman. "Oh! the conceit of these Englishers — it is almost as bad as the conceit of the Frenchers, only that a person is more used to the one than the other. One would think there never were but two languages in the world — English and French! Why, then, sir, Bazan and I were speaking in a language that was a grand language, and a great language, and a language in which thousands of books were written, hundreds of years before the French began to chatter in their lingo, or English was ever dreamt of. Maybe! you never heard that there was once such a thing spoken by kings, and warriors, and poets, as the Irish language."

"The Irish language!" I exclaimed, in amazement. "Do you mean to tell me that the Breton peasantry can either understand or speak the Irish language?"

"If you ask me, sir, if poor old Dolphy Bazan can speak Irish as well as I do, then I must say he does not. It is a treat to him to hear me speaking; but it's like listening to a knife-grinder for me to stand by, and see how he murders my native tongue. A Scotchman can talk it, but very badly: a Welshman, too, makes but a poor hand of it; still I can construe what they are at pretty well, and they can understand me beautifully. As to the Bretons, and the Irish language they speak, why, if you would wish to know the distinction between my Irish and Bazan's Irish, I can give you an idea of it.

It is just the difference that there would be between the way you yourself now speak English and the way you would speak English, supposing you stuffed your nose with snuff, and lost your three upper front teeth: it would be the same language, with one-half of the vowels smothered, and one-third of the consonants rubbed as clean out as a wet sponge wipes into nothing a sum in arithmetic, on a new slate."

The spokesman was plainly an original, and I determined, if possible, to establish an acquaintanceship with him. I fancied that, in the occupation of his leisure hours I had discovered one of the weaknesses to which genius is sometimes liable. I therefore remarked:

"That is, I suppose, French tobacco?"

"Indeed it is; sir, and French tobacco is the worst apology for smoking that ever a poor creature tried to console himself with, when a thousand miles away from Dundalk, or Limerick, where the best pig-tail in the world is made."

"What do you say to James's River tobacco?" I asked.

"It's a Cavendish you mean. Oh, sir, it is seldom a poor fellow like me can ever get even a whiff of another man's smoking Cavendish."

"Here," said I — "if you will do me the favour to accept it — is a cake of the material you so much admire. It comes direct to me from James's River."

"Thank you, sir," said my newly-made friend, joyfully receiving the proffered gift, and putting it close to his nose. As he did so, his eyes glistened with delight, and he exclaimed:

"Were you ever in the Phoenix Park, sir, in the

month of May, when the hawthorn is in blossom, and the air for miles around is full of perfume?"

"Yes, I have been there: it is very delicious."

"Delicious! Oh! it is heavenly! The rose is sweet, and the white lily is sweet, and the violet is sweet, and the yellow primrose in its green leaves is sweet; but of all the scents in the world, there is nothing to compare with the hawthorn blossom — not even the new-mown hay itself. Well, sir, the only thing on the habitable globe that puts me in mind of the Phoenix Park, and the hawthorn in the month of May, is — Cavendish tobacco."

He commenced operations on the Cavendish. "Now," said he — "Now for such a draw in as I haven't had since I last saw the Shannon. When I have taken two full pipes of this, I wouldn't change places with the Lord-Lieutenant: a child might play with me, and the discourse that would be in me would be better worth listening to than an actor in Crow Street."

"You live, I suppose, in this neighbourhood?" I said, determined not to let the conversation drop with this rhapsody.

The man, without taking his eyes from his work, nodded towards the high hill he sat facing, and replied: "On the other side of that hill there is a great big house, belonging to a French baron, and I am living with him in a double capacity."

"In a double capacity! discharging two duties at the same time! May I ask what they are?"

"You may, and welcome. The fact is, sir, I am hired to do two things. I am an Irish groom, and an English schoolmaster. I take care of four French horses, and I am trying to teach their owner English; and a bad

hand I am making of the two of them. I can't get the master to understand one word of the language; and I can never get the horses fit to do anything: the unnatural brutes are always troubled with the gripes: and that's what brought me to the bridge of Lehon to-day. I came here to smoke, and mature my ideas on a new horse-ball I am thinking of administering."

"Then you are a horse-doctor also."

"No; but Dolphy Bazan is; and I came to consult him; and that I may never smoke this pipe; but when the two of us got together we forgot all about the horses; for he began telling me of the old times, and what happened in this very place; and he narrated a story the like of which I never heard before. As it is all to the honour and glory of one of the saints of Ireland, I would like to tell it to you, sir. It is really worth listening to; and if you had the time to spare, I would be delighted you heard it. I want to show you I can be grateful for your beautiful present; and the grateful feeling of an humble heart is all poor Peter Gorman has to give to those who are kind to him."

"Your name, I suppose, is Peter Gorman?"

"It is, sir."

"Very well, then, Peter Gorman, proceed with your story. You shall find me an attentive listener."

"It is no story at all, sir," said Peter Gorman, as he lighted his pipe. "It is a history I am going to recount. It was in the year five hundred and forty-two of the Christian era —."

"Are you quite sure as to the date, Peter Gorman?"

"As sure as if I lived in that year," replied Gorman.

"But I beg your pardon, sir, for saying one thing to you. Listen quietly to me, if you can, and don't make any

observations, and I will narrate to you all I have just heard, and, if I can, in the very words it was told to me."

CHAPTER I.

THERE were, you must know, two saints, born in Ireland, on the same day, and about the same hour; and, of course, they both lived in the same times, and each of them tried to do, so long as breath warmed him, as much good as he possibly could to his fellow creatures. These two saints had both the same name; for they were both called Columb; but there was this difference between them, that one of them never stirred a step out of Ireland, and the other never stopped travelling abroad, hither and thither, backwards and forwards, in strange costumes.

The Irish saint, that stayed at home, built so many monasteries and churches, that he was called Columbk-kill: and the Irish saint that went abroad, built so many churches, and monasteries, that he was called Columbanus: and the reason, I suppose, for this is that kill is the Irish for church, and banus, I suppose, is the same thing in some outlandish language of which I am teetotally ignorant.

One day, these two Irish saints met together on the Rock-road, near Dublin, and after shaking hands as if they were two brothers, the Irish stay-at-home saint said to the saint who was always on the foot: "Hullo! Columb, I see you have got a new pilgrim's staff, and a fresh pair of brogues on you — a sure sign you are going somewhere. Might I take the liberty of being after asking you, what side of the world are you facing to now?"

"Faix!" answered the travelling saint, "it is a question as easily answered as asked. I have had a letter this morning, telling me there is horrid work going on in a part of France, called Armorica (the same place that is now called Brittany). I am told — that is, it is stated in this letter of Bishop Felix — you remember him, Columbkil — he is a County Cavan man, and was born in Bailieborough?"

"I do know him, as well as if I stood godfather for him," answered Columbkil. "He was one of the MacQuaides, and is Bishop of Nantes, at the present writing."

"The very same," said Columbanus.

"An honest man," said Columbkil, "and so were his father and mother before him. Indeed, I never knew any but honest men to be born in Bailieborough."

"Nor I, either," said Columbanus.

"Anything Bishop Felix MacQuaide states, you may be as sure it is true as if you saw it in print," said Columbkil. "Bishop Felix wouldn't tell a lie if he was paid for it."

"That he wouldn't," said Columbanus. "Well, now, just listen to me. That same Felix writes to me, that all the country round Lehon — but you don't know where Lehon is."

"No — nor don't want to know," observed Columbkil.

"May be you're right," Columbanus replied.

"I know I am right," replied Columbkil. "What would be the use of my bothering my poor brains about a place I have no call to? It is more than I can do to visit all parts of Ireland, and I ought to be everywhere, from Leixlip to Lismore, from Galloping Green to Gal-

way, from Cappoquin to Cabinteely, and from Banagher to Bandon."

"True, for you," said Columbanus. "But now as to the letter of Bishop Felix. He tells me that the whole of the country round Lehon, all along the sides of the Rance, from Lehon down to the sea, is in a state of the frightfullest commotion, on account of the wickedness of the six Pagan giants that have built themselves a castle on a high hill, overlooking the ford of Lehon, and no one — man or boy, woman or girl, horse, dog, pig, or cow, can cross from one bank of the stream to the other without being robbed, murdered, or run away with by these six Pagan giants. Armies have been sent against them, and they have slaughtered all the soldiers. Dukes and counts have tried to make them prisoners, but, instead of succeeding, they have themselves been caught, like so many rats in a trap, and — to themselves be it told! — no sooner have they been caught, than they have been dragged inside the giants' fort; and there — having been first hanged by the neck until they were dead — they have been thrown upon burning piles of wood, and so offered up as sacrifices to such Pagan deities as Jupiter, Mars, Neptune, Vulcan, Apollo, and Mercury — for it is after one or other of those abominable idols each of the giants is called."

"Oh! the Pagans!" exclaimed Columbkil, quite terrified. "Why, those giants must be of the same religion as the old Romans were. What is to be done with them!"

"I am going to see what is to be done with them," said Columbanus.

"You!" cried Columbkil. "Ah! stay at home, my

poor man. Why in the world should you make a martyr of yourself for a parcel of foreigners?"

"I tell you what, Columbkil," answered Columbanus, "I defy all the Pagans that ever were born to hurt so much as a hair of my head, if I once get your blessing. So don't trouble your head in trying to advise me against going; but just lay your hand on my forehead — put the sign of the cross on me, and say '*that* be between you and all harm, Columb, till we meet again!' There, now do that for me, and in twenty-four hours afterwards I will be on my way to France. There, do it at once," said Columbanus, as he knelt down on the bare road before Columbkil.

Columbkil put his right hand on the forehead of Columbanus — did as he was asked — and then said: "Now stand straight up, Columbanus."

Columbanus stood up, and the moment he did so, Columbkil popped down on his two knees, and said:

"One good turn deserves another. Now give me your blessing, Columbanus, and then go your ways in peace."

"There is my blessing for you," said Columbanus, "and now — for a shake hands, and then for my 'dough-and-durrus' with you, and then — I am out of Ireland as quick and as lively as a sky-rocket."

CHAPTER II.

It was in the year five hundred and forty-two that Columbanus arrived within half a mile of Lehon.

Columbanus was dead tired.

He had walked all the way from the sea-side that morning, and he sat down on the top of a high hill: the same hill on which the town of Dinan is now built —

but then there was nothing to be seen about the place but furze-bushes, and brambles, without any blackberries on them.

"I'm as hungry as a hawk, and as weary as an old garron," said Columbanus; "but I have the comfort of knowing I have got into a neighbourhood where there is a chance of food and shelter; for I hear a great noise, as if there was a whole lot of men shouting for a wager against one another. Now, where there are men, there must be beds to lie in, and dinners to be eaten; and it would be a hard palliasse I couldn't sleep on; and a mighty tough bit of meat I couldn't eat with a relish!"

As Columbanus was thus thinking to himself, he heard a terrible hubbub, and in the middle of it all he fancied he could recognise the voices of two parties, as eager in their vociferations as if they were engaged in a county election, and one of them crying out, "High! for MacLaw!" and others trying to outbawl that cry by shouting, "High! for the Pagans!"

"'High! for MacLaw!'" said Columbanus; "I like that cry — it puts me in mind of poor old Ireland — the land of the O's and the Mac's. But then, that other cry, 'High! for the Pagans!' — Oh! the unnatural beasts, to boast they aren't even Christians. I'm for the MacLaws, at all events. Fine or fair, ugly or pretty, I'm with them, and against the Pagans. But now to see what all this is about, although it's myself that is hardly able to put one foot before the other. Oh! murder! murder! but I feel as lazy as the tinker who laid down his budget to sneeze."

So saying, the saint hobbled as well as he could round the hill, so as that, without being himself ob-

served, he might learn from his own eye-sight what was passing.

The saint had not far to travel. There still, as the day he looked upon them, are the two hills facing each other, and the ford of Lehon, where is now the bridge, right between them. On the top of those two hills were two high castles; and, from these castles, soldiers were discharging great big stones, and whole flights of arrows at one another.

"I had much rather be looking on at such play as that, than taking part in it," said Columbanus.

The saint stopped to see the two factions — the MacLaws and the Pagans — fighting, in the hope that one or the other would at last get tired, and that whoever won would give him his dinner.

For a full hour he looked on the warriors on both sides, and then, all of a sudden, he saw on one hill, where there was a green flag flying, that it was pulled down, and a white banner took its place. At the same moment the blood-red flag that was on the enemy's hill was changed for a white streamer, and then there was an end to stone-throwing and arrow-shooting.

"Are they going to make peace with one another?" said Columbanus. "I hope so, for then I would be sure of a dinner. But I must now have something to eat, no matter who gives it to me. The green flag, I suppose, belongs to the MacLaws, and the red flag to the Pagans. In war time, all good generals say, you should quarter on the enemy — and as I regard the Pagans as enemies, I'll try them first, to see what is to be got out of them. Besides, they are nearer to me where I am now standing than the MacLaws."

With these words Columbanus limped down the hill

of Dinan, and then he clambered up the hill to the giant's castle. As he found a big trumpet lying on the ground outside the gate of the fortification, he took up the instrument, and played Patrick's Day upon it, to let the Pagans inside know that there was one outside wishing to speak with them.

When the saint had done playing, there appeared on the top of the wall a young man with black hair, and a beard of the fieriest, foxiest red that ever yet was seen.

"Holloa! you fellow, trumpeting down there," said the young man with the terrible bristling red beard, "what are you making all that noise for? disturbing honest people, just as they are sitting down to their dinner."

"Are you the master of this place?" said Columbanus.

"No," said the red-bearded man. "There are six masters in this house: they are the six giants of Lehon: and, as they don't speak your language, they bid me tell you to cut your stick in less than no time, or it will be worse for you."

"How do you know, you red-muzzled ignoramus," said the saint, "that I don't speak their language, not all as one as yours? I can speak every language — that is, every language to which there is a grammar."

"Well," said the red-bearded man, "there is no grammar to their language, for they speak nothing but gibberish; and in gibberish they bid me tell you to be off with yourself, and then to ask you what it is you want to say to them."

"All I want to say to them is, that I want a good breakfast, for I have eaten nothing to-day, as yet; then I want a substantial dinner; then a nice supper; and

then the best bed in the house; for I am a saint that has travelled all the way from Ireland to France; and my name — a better name than ever you had — is Columb, sometimes called for shortness, Columbanus."

"There is no breakfast, no dinner, no supper, and no bed to be got here by wanderers without swords," answered the red-bearded man. "The six giants of Lehon hate saints, and they detest Irishmen. And now, all I can tell you is — if you stay there two minutes longer, something will happen to you that will put an end to your travels for ever and a day."

"Well — I'm off; but, before I go, I will ask you for one thing," said Columbanus.

"What is it?" asked the red-bearded man.

"That you will favour me with your name. I should like to remember you in my prayers."

"I don't care for your prayers," answered the red-bearded man; "but as to my name, you can have it, and welcome, for I am not ashamed of it. I am the Count Canao, and the son of Howell, King of Armorica. But, again, I say, be off with yourself, for the six giants of Lehon are waiting dinner for me."

"The back of my hand and the sole of my foot to you, Mister Canao, son of King Howell," said Columbanus, as he trudged down the hill, crossed the ford, and climbed, as well as he could, that frightful steep hill there; on which some Frenchman has lately built the greatest gazebo of a distracted-looking house to be seen in the whole country.

CHAPTER III.

OUTSIDE the gate of the castle in which lived the MacLaws, there was, of course, a bugle, and the saint took it up and played, in a manner that would wheedle the birds off the bushes, — that fine old air, to which the appropriate words in Irish are:

Tow, row, row! Paddy will you now,
Take me whilst I'm in the humour,
And that's now.

The instant the first notes of this old Irish air were played, open flew the gates; and, before the saint had time to finish the tune, out came King MacLaw himself, as fine a-looking old gentleman as you could see in a day's walk, but still bearing a very strong likeness to the negro, Count Canao; but, with this difference, that the hair of King MacLaw's head was as red fire, and his beard as black as a raven's wing. King MacLaw was followed by six gentlemen, as fine, stout, strong, hearty, handsome, able young men, as you could meet at a hurling-match in Tipperary.

"A hundred thousand welcomes to you, whoever you are, for the sake of the country you come from," said King MacLaw, stepping up, and shaking hands with Columbanus. "But, come in out of the air, my good man. You shall have the best of roast beef for your tea, and the best feather-bed of my own to sleep in."

"More power to you, King MacLaw, and your health to wear it!" said the saint. "It is easy seeing you have a good drop of Irish blood in your veins."

"You may say that with your own pretty mouth," replied King MacLaw, "but hurry in with you. My heart is full of grief and trouble this blessed day; and,

the only comfort I have in life, is when I see people eating or drinking, or when I am doing that same myself."

In they brought the saint to the castle, and nothing would do King MacLaw but he must place the saint by his own side, and carve the saint's dinner for him, and he put so much meat on the saint's plate, as would puzzle six harvest-labourers to get through; and he never stopped filling the saint's tumbler for him; until, at last, Columbanus had to stand up, and declare he would leave the house that instant, if his Majesty did not stop stuffing him like a crammed fowl.

"I never think I give my guests half enough," said King MacLaw, "until I find them ready to take their oaths they have had too much."

"You learned that trick from your Irish ancestors," said the saint.

"True for you," said the king.

"More power to you!" answered the saint. "And now, King MacLaw, as you have been doing so many things to oblige me, will you do another?"

"Twenty," said the king; "and, the more you ask, the more I'll be obliged to you."

"One at a time is enough," said the saint, "but will you do it?"

"To be sure I will," said King MacLaw. "What is it?"

"Just tell me why your heart is so full of grief and trouble. I have a reason for asking you," said the saint.

"Wait till I mix myself a tumbler of brandy-punch," said the King. "Sorrow is dry; and I never could have the heart to tell you that same, without taking a drop every two minutes of the real Nantes brandy."

The king put three lumps of loaf-sugar into a tumbler, then filled it half-full of brandy, and then poured in some hot water, stirred the mixture with a gold spoon, and then swallowed two glasses of the punch as hot as he could sup it. Wiping his eyes, he then thus began: —

“My friend —”

The king took a spoonful of punch.

“My friend,” commenced the king; “for, as you are my guest, you must be my friend. I was the favourite son of the good King Howell, who was, in his day, one of the Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur of England. My father was King of Armorica, and one of the best men that ever lived; but the misfortune of all his children was, that he had a great deal too many of them: some good, some bad, some saints, some sinners, more sinners than saints. There were — I may as well tell you their names — Rigual, Rioval, Jean Reith, Jona, Leonora, Pat-Ubrual, Waroc, Budie, Soene, MacLaw, that’s-myself, and the worst of us all, Canao.”

“Canao! whew!” cried Columbanus, “is that the thief with the black hair, and a bushy beard as red as fire?”

“That is the identical chap,” said King MacLaw, with a deep sigh. “Now, my father left us all quite enough to live on, if each would be contented with his share. But, wirrah! strue! such was not the case. That thief of the world, Canao, murdered first our eldest brother, King Rigual, and, taking possession of his estates, forced his nephew, Jubual, to fly for his life, and then compelled his brother’s widow to marry him.”

“Oh! the monster!” shrieked the saint. “To marry his own brother’s widow! Why, he must be worse than a Turk, or any other heathen.”

"And so he is," replied King MacLaw; "but I have not told you the worst about him yet."

"Howld your whisht," said Columbanus, "he could not do worse than marry his brother's wife."

"Couldn't he, indeed!" said the king. "It shows your own goodness to say so, and that you don't know what wickedness is."

"Don't I enogh!" answered Columbanus. "I am a bishop, and I have heard confessions in my time, and I ought to know a great deal of wickedness."

"And are you a bishop?" asked King MacLaw.

"To be sure I am," said the saint.

"A real Christian bishop, is it?" asked MacLaw.

"Yes, a real Christian bishop to the backbone. Look at my ring," said the saint.

"Give us the hand," said the king. "And now your blessing. Boys, jewel! all down on your knees till we get his lordship's blessing."

"There, it's for you," said the saint, blessing them all as they knelt before him. "And now get up, King MacLaw, take another drop of the punch, and then go on with your story. I am in a hurry for you to be at an end of it, for a reason I have."

King MacLaw was so eager to do everything a bishop desired, that he never let the tumbler from his lips until he had swallowed every drop in it.

"Here," said the king, turning to one of the fine, handsome, tall young men who were sitting near him.

"Here, Childebert, my bonchal, make me another tumbler of brandy-punch — but mind you don't make it too strong: let it be, at the least, half-water — and remember three lumps of sugar — no more, nor no less."

"Go on with your story," said the saint.

"Well, as I was telling your lordship," said the king to Columbanus, "that villain of a brother of mine, the red-haired Canao, not content with marrying his brother's widow, next contrived the murder of two other brothers, Budie and Waroc; and, hearing that I had gone on my Easter duty to the good bishop of Nantes, he had me followed to that place by a whole troop of assassins. They got into the bishop's house. They were in the next room to me. I heard them sharpening their swords, and I had not one fighting friend to stand by me. The house was surrounded, and blockaded by villains thirsting for my blood, and — I gave myself up for lost."

"And how in the world did you escape?" asked Columbanus.

"Only listen to me," said the king. "The Bishop of Nantes knowing the room I was in — his own sitting-room — came by a secret passage from the church into it, brought me out of it into the church, where he had his own tomb prepared; and, making me descend into it, he closed it up, and, then conducting the soldiers of Canao into the church, he pointed out the tomb to them, and said to them: "You seek for MacLaw. He is in that tomb. He is, therefore, no longer to be counted as amongst the living, but the dead. There he is inhumed; there he is entombed; and of that fact I pledge you my word as a bishop. Say then to Canao you have seen the tomb in which all that remains of his brother Mac Law is to be found. With this declaration the assassins were content, with such intelligence they returned to Canao. And so the Bishop of Nantes saved my life."

"And the Bishop of Nantes is the Right Reverend Felix MacQuaide," remarked Columbanus, "and Bishop Felix is a County Cavan man. None but a Bailieborough

boy would ever have the wit to think of such a device as that. Here is long life and a happy death to my fellow countryman, Felix. He is a credit to old Ireland, at all events."

"By Dad he is," said the king. "He saved me from death by burying me alive. But now for the worst part of my story."

"What! Worse than what you have been telling me?" said the saint, starting up from the table.

"Ay, a hundred times worse," answered the king.

"Oh! there is no standing this," cried the saint. "Will you ever finish telling me your misfortunes; so that I may set about putting an end to them?"

"Sit down again, if you please," said the king, "and just hearken to what I am going now to tell you. I am the father of a family, — a family of six daughters. O, such lovely daughters! All King Howell's — my father's descendants were remarkable for having either red or black hair; and all my daughters have —"

"Not red hair, I hope?" said the saint; "because if they have, I had much rather not be introduced to them."

"No — but the likeness that my daughters have to my father's family is shown in the redness of their cheeks and the blackness of their eyes."

"O, that makes them interesting. I hope that villain of a brother of yours has not tried to murder them also?"

"He has tried to do worse than murder them," said the king.

"What could be worse than murdering them?" said the saint.

"Just listen to me," said the king. "My six lovely

daughters, with cheeks as red as apples, and eyes as black as sloes, were cried up all over Europe for their beauty. I was nearly eaten out of house and home with the troops of kings, and princes, dukes, counts, esquires, and marquises, coming to court them. I bid them take their choice, and they selected those six young gentlemen that are now sitting at the table with us. The eldest of my darling girls was to be married to that strapping fellow who is now making a tumbler of brandy-punch for me. That is Childebert, King of France, and it is in his Court my nephew, Jubual, is preserved from the dagger of his uncle, Canao. Well — that same uncle — my wicked brother Canao — hearing that my six lovely daughters were about being so well and respectably married, sends to Africa for six giants — horrid monsters of overgrown atrocity — eight feet high every man of them — places them in that castle on the hill yonder, where they have been playing the Mischief with the whole country; and to sum up all, no longer ago than the night before last, those six giants watched for my daughters, and whilst the innocent ducks of diamonds were bathing together in the Rance, ran away clean and clever with every one of them, took them to that castle, and — there they are! From that place Canao has sent us word they will be married to the giants this very evening. Canao asked for a truce to-day from twelve to four o'clock. It was to send me word the marriages were to take place at seven o'clock to the minute, and to invite myself and my daughters' accepted lovers to the wedding. And now, bishop, I ask you if you can wonder that my heart is full of grief and sorrow. All my lovely daughters will lose the fine husbands they preferred, and I was about to give them.

That is a bad look out for them, whilst it is much worse so far as I am concerned; for I have the prospect before me that twelvemonths shall not have passed away until I am the grandfather to a race of giants who will never be baptised as Christians, but, like their huge fathers, will live Pagans and die sinners. King Childebert, my bonchal, give me the tumbler. If it was not for the brandy-punch I would die of grief, and be buried in earnest, and no longer able to hear a Bailieborough bishop singing over my tomb-stone, as he once did in Nantes, a *De profundis* for the repose of my soul!"

CHAPTER IV.

No sooner had King MacLaw finished his story than Bishop Columbanus stood bolt upright, and placing his hands behind his back, he walked up and down the room a hundred times, at the least, considering all the time what was best for him to say or do, that might afford consolation to the afflicted father of six beautiful young girls who had been torn away from the suitors they preferred, and were about to be united in marriage with six ill-looking, overgrown, sweltering, ill-behaved, badly conducted Pagan giants.

At last the bishop stopped walking, and taking a chair he sat down by the side of King MacLaw, and said:

"Why don't you kill these six plundering giants, and your brother Canao into the bargain?"

"Because I'm not able," answered King MacLaw.

"Have you tried?"

"I have."

"And what came of it?"

"I'll tell you," said King MacLaw. "Did your lordship ever give a live pig a kick in the ham?"

"Never," said the bishop.

"Then take my advice," said the king, "and never try to do it, or you will knock your toes into smithereens. Well, my trying to kill these six Pagan giants and my brother Canao along with them, is something like a Christian trying to hurt a full-grown pig by kicking it. I could do them no harm, whilst I have injured myself very considerably. I might as well be throwing snowballs at them as seeking to kill them with stones and arrows. Their skin is as hard as flint, and their hands as strong as iron."

"And what do you intend to do now?" asked the bishop.

"I know no more," said King MacLaw, "than the ancient hero, Pompey, when he was smashed, horse, foot, and dragoons at the battle of Pharsalia. I really do not see what is left for me to do, unless it be, like him, to fly to Egypt, or to take to the drinking."

"Phew!" said the saint. "Don't be so downhearted as all that comes to. While there is life there is hope: all is not lost that is in danger; and faint heart never won fair lady."

"True for you," said the king.

"Your brother, Count Canao, has sent you and your six intended sons-in-law an invitation to the wedding of the six giants with your own six daughters, and their cheeks like red apples, and eyes black as sloes."

"He has, the villain."

"And have you sent him an answer?"

"Me! is it me send him an answer? The thief of

the world! I wouldn't cough in the same field with him."

"Well, now, King MacLaw, be bid by me. Send him an answer. Say you and these six fine young men forenenst me will be with him half an hour before the time appointed for the marriage of your daughters."

"Are you in earnest when you say that to me?" said the king, as he laid down his tumbler, and looked straight in the face of the bishop.

"I am in downright earnest," answered Columbanus. "Just do as I bid you, and by the virtue of my mitre you won't be sorry for it."

"I never knew a good man yet who was saucy to a bishop," said King MacLaw. "I'll do everything you tell me."

"My blessing on you and the likes of you," said Columbanus. "There, now, send a messenger this minute to your brother. Then do you and these six young gentlemen be off, and array yourselves in your best clothes, just as you and they would do, if they were going to be married to your six daughters with the rosy cheeks and the black eyes. But, mind, let every man of them bring his sword, and his bow and arrows with him. Mind, now, and don't let them forget the bows and arrows for a reason I have. And now, King MacLaw, let me have a room to myself. I want to shave and wash, and tidy myself up as well as I can, for I wish to look as decent and respectable as I really am — for I will go along with you. But I will go, not like a poor pilgrim as you see me now, but with my crook in my hand, and my mitre on my head, like a real bishop."

As the clock struck six in King MacLaw's castle the gate was opened, and out marched, two and two, the

king, the bishop, and the six intended sons-in-law, and all of them dressed as grand as play-actors. King MacLaw had a gold crown on his head, and walked by the side of the bishop, who wore a silver mitre. The king and the bishop were the two first that appeared, and the young men followed in pairs, and every one of them, in addition to his fine new clothes, had a sword by his side, a bow in his hand, and a bundle of arrows at his back.

It took them a good half-hour to walk down the steep hill on which was the king's castle, and to climb the hill on which was the castle of the giants.

The clock was chiming the half-hour as they reached the front gate to the giants' fortress where the travellers' trumpet was lying.

Columbanus took up the trumpet, and, to show those inside that neither himself nor any one with him, was a bit daunted, he played, with elegant variations, the tune *We won't go home till morning*.

The minute he finished the tune, the gate was unbolted, and in marched King MacLaw and his company; and the moment they did so the gate was slammed-to again behind them. And then the six giants, who were standing inside, opened their great big mouths as if they would swallow the king, the bishop, and the six young men. The six giants gave a roar of laughter so loud that it might be easily heard from the Hill of Howth to the Hill of Tara.

"They may laugh that win," said the bishop, giving the king a nudge with his elbow.

"Caught at last," said Canao with the red beard. "These fellows will soon find it was easier to come in than to get out."

"God save all here that's good!" said Columbanus, as he walked arm-in-arm with the king into the courtyard.

"Have you no more manners than that?" said the red-bearded Count Canao, stepping up to his lordship, and knocking the mitre off his head; "to keep on your hat before your betters?"

"You are not the first blackguard that insulted a bishop, and was made to sup sorrow for it afterwards," mildly replied Columbanus, as he stooped down, picked up his mitre, and wiped it with a silk handkerchief.

"Is this the way you treat my friends, you murdering thief?" said King MacLaw.

"To be sure it is, if they don't know how to behave themselves," replied Canao. "And so," he added, sneering at the king, "you have come to your daughters' wedding?"

"Yes; and brought a Christian bishop with me to marry them," answered Mac-Law.

"We will have no Christian bishops here," said Canao. "The six giants are six Pagans, and they won't be married by any one but an idolatrous priest."

"Then they never shall be married to King MacLaw's daughters," exclaimed Columbanus.

"And who else shall they marry?" asked Count Canao, making a face at the bishop.

"To these six, fine, strapping young gentlemen that have come along with their father," answered the bishop.

"You are as drunk as a fiddler, or you would never say that," observed Canao, getting in a passion.

"Wait awhile, my bonchal!" remarked the bishop, as meek as a lamb.

"I won't wait another minute," said Canao. "Here,

bring out my six spanking nieces and the idolatrous priest till they are married off-hand to these six giants. The moment the wedding is over, I will leave the six giants to cut off the heads of these six young men, whilst I have the satisfaction of chopping these two old fellows — MacLaw and the bishop — into mince-meat."

"And was it with that intention you invited your brother and these young men to the wedding?" asked the bishop, as he grasped tightly his crook in his right hand.

"To be sure it was," answered Canao.

"Your time is up then, my chap!" said the bishop, putting the mitre on his head, and making a circle in the air with his crook. "Count Canao with the red beard, my malediction upon you and the six giants of Lehon! From this until the day of judgment I doom you and the six giants to remain on this castle; not as you are now, but in the form you deserve to retain. I asked you, this morning, for charity, and you refused it; you showed that your heart was of stone, and be now, and until time is no more, a heap of stones. There! take THAT!" said Columbanus, striking Canao a mighty blow with his crook.

"O! you atrocious, negro-romancing, old —!"

Those were the last words that Canao with the red beard ever spoke; for, before he could finish the sentence, he was changed into a great round pillar of rough-hewn stones.

The six giants saw the punishment the bishop had inflicted upon Canao. They saw that Columbanus could, if he liked, make men into mile-stones; and at once they fell on their knees before his lordship.

"There is no time for repentance in this world for

unbaptised Pagans," said the bishop. "You have run the full length of your tether, my fine fellows — so be off with you! Get up out of that, and walk away with yourselves — there, and there, and there, and there, and there, and there!" added Columbanus, as he laid the end of his crook on each giant's head, and then pointed to a different side of the fortification. "Just be off, as I tell you, in a jiffey, and stand there until these six young gentlemen make a cock-shot of every man of you."

The giants did as they were ordered, because they had not the power to refuse. In a moment they stood as stiff as pokers in the various places pointed out to them; and each of them, all the time, trembling like a dog in a wet sack.

"Are you all ready, boys?" said Columbanus, turning to the six young gentlemen.

"All right!" answered King Childebert. "The moment your lordship gives the word of command, there will be six arrows sticking in the six gizzards of the six ugly giants."

"Make ready! present! fire!" said the bishop.

Whizz went the arrows! and then there was a screech heard, such as there has not been the like of, since the Danes were slaughtered by Brian Boroihme at Clontarf. At the very instant the six giants were struck with the arrows they were turned into six round towers. And there they remain to this very day, for all the world who will take the trouble to go down to Lehon to look at them.

"That is a good day's work I have done already," said Columbanus. "I have put my mark upon seven merciless, murdering miscreants, and they will bear it for

centuries to come; but not in the same way. For the giants are killed outright, whilst Count Canao will be hundreds upon hundreds of years in dying. There will be a bit of life left in every stone of the tower that belongs to him; and when, at last, that tower decays away, his doom is, that those stones shall never be used for any other purpose than to build pig-sties. And, now, King Mac Law, how do you feel?"

"As happy as a lord," answered the king, joyfully.

"But not half as happy as you shall be before you put on your night-cap; nor a bit more happy than you deserve to be. Here," said the saint, "bring out the king's six daughters until I marry them at once. It wants still ten minutes to seven, and before the clock strikes — I swear by my mitre! — I will marry every one of the girls to every one of the fine, able, dashing, handsome, young fellows that have come here along with me."

The bishop kept his word. In ten minutes all the king's daughters were married; and in forty minutes afterwards there were bonfires lighted on the tops of the seven new towers of the old fortification on the hill, and those seven new towers, were as you well know, nothing else than the stony bodies of the red-bearded Count Canao, and his friends the six Pagan giants.

"You have done your work well," said the king to the saint, as he lighted his lordship to bed. "And, in order that I may not be behind-hand with you, I intend to keep my lord-chancellor and my treasurer up the entire night writing like two law-clerks making out a grant of all the lands you have looked upon to-day, and conferring them upon your lordship, so that you may, in

remembrance of your own virtuous deeds this day, and for the good of others, and the benefit of my poor soul, build a monastery in Lehon."

"And I'll do that same," said the bishop.

And he did it.

And, to show how true all this is, there are to be seen to this day the ruins of the monastery by the river-side; and, in the crumbling towers on the hill, the decaying remains of the six giants of Lehon.

THE DEVIL'S MARK.

I.

ON the morning of August the first, sixteen hundred and fourteen, the village of Hambledon was the scene of much lively bustle which rallied chiefly round the dwelling of Master Simon, farrier, blacksmith, and wheelwright for the township. Master Simon's only daughter Rose — the White Rose of Hambledon, the folks called her — was going to be married that day to her cousin, Richard Nicholl, who had come to Hambledon about a year before to work at the forge for his kinsman, whose strength was declining, and had fallen in love at once with the pretty and warm-hearted Rose. They were a very wellmatched couple of young people, for if she was as blooming and sweet as her name, Richard was the goodliest man in that parish, and many another. She was nineteen, and he was twenty-six — both of them in the full glow and excellence of youth.

The forge fire was out that morning, and if any traveller's horse had chosen to cast a shoe near the village, he must have gone a couple of miles further, to Whistlebank, before the damage could have been repaired. In Master Simon's cottage were collected half the women of the place, but Rose's chamber was the favourite point, for there the young maiden's toilet was being accom-

plished by half-a-dozen of her particular friends. We ought not to go into that mysterious sanctum, I know; but for the telling of our story it is necessary that we should look through the doorway and over the heads of the crowding gossips, and listen also to the remarks of the handmaidens engaged in their agreeable tasks. The costume of those days was not remarkable either for its picturesqueness or its grace; but Rose's pretty shape and sweet face were proof against its disfigurements. She stood in the centre of the room, fair and blushing, in a petticoat of remarkable stiffness and a bodice of preternatural length, her gold-coloured hair rolled up elaborately, and a highly-starched ruff lying close at hand to imprison her round white throat.

There was not one of the half-dozen friends so beautiful as Rose; but one of them — the chief it seemed — from her being the putter on of the bows and decorative paraphernalia of the dress, had a singular countenance — cold, repellent, and stone-grey. The blackness of her eyebrows, which met and were depressed over her eyes, gave her a furtive, stealthy expression, and her narrow scarlet lips, while they indicated a sensual disposition, showed also one of cruelty and vindictiveness. She was older than most of the girls, but still quite young, and had pretensions to beauty which she was more ready to assert than others were to allow. Everybody, however, Rose included, treated her with a certain respect, for she was waiting-woman to my lady the wife of Sir Roger Bedinfield, at Hambledon Hall. Her name was Mistress Gilbert, and she was reputed to possess philters and love-charms, which in those good old times were held in high repute, not only amongst silly maidens but even amongst wise and discreet matrons.

One charm, however, Mistress Gilbert did not possess — that charm which would have charmed Richard Nicholl's heart out of his bosom. Her disappointed hopes had been a sly theme of talk many a time in the village, and even Rose herself had shared in it. Possibly that was the reason why, when Mistress Gilbert's chilly hands glided so stealthily about her person, a slight shiver kept running over her flesh.

"You are cold, Rose," said the waiting-woman; "shut the window, some of you. You shudder all over when you are touched."

"It can't be that her enemy is walking over the place where her grave is to be," remarked a careless young body who looked straight at Mistress Gilbert, and then turned red under the cold scrutiny that she received from her cruel eyes.

"Rose is too good to have an enemy. Every one loves her," said the waiting-woman slowly: directly she had spoken she approached her lips to the white polished shoulder, and blew softly at a tiny brown mark, and then brushed it with her hand carelessly.

"You will have to blow a long time before you blow away that little mole, Mistress Gilbert," laughed Rose: "I was born with it."

"I am short-sighted this morning — I mistook it for a fly:" and the waiting-woman began to arrange the starched ruff.

Rose would have been glad to dispense with the honour of Mistress Gilbert's company at her marriage; because Richard Nicholl did not like her, and also because the waiting-woman's aspirations after the handsome young smith, offended her feminine prejudices; but Mistress Gilbert invited herself for the purpose of

dressing the bride, and even lent her taste and skill in composing the attire to be worn on the occasion, so there was no evading her cold, uncomfortable presence. When the ceremony was over in the chamber, and Rose's beauty was eclipsed as far as it could be by her stiff clothing, she was ushered into the living-room; where were her father, Richard as fine as herself, and the male friends of the family.

Richard received her with a fine honest blush, which was more softly reflected on her own face; and, after a short interval, the whole company fell into order, two and two, to walk across the green to church, where Parson Phillips was waiting to marry the young pair. My Lady Bedinfield and two of her daughters had thought right to honour the ceremony by coming to look on from the elevation of the family pew, and afterwards to praise the rustic grace of the White Rose of Hambledon. Mistress Lucy Bedinfield and her sister Elizabeth would have given half their rich clothing for a tint out of her cheeks: they were but sickly young gentlewomen on whose complexions Mistress Gilbert's various washes had no effect at all, unless it were to make them deader and duller than even Nature — who coloured them in one of her penurious, pallid moods — had ever intended.

When Rose walked out of church, her pretty blue eyes downcast, and holding Richard's arm, the folks inside blessed her softly as became the place, and those outside gave them a cheer, after which the bells rang out a famous wedding peal. Mistress Gilbert's clayey visage looked colder and more clayey than ever as they disappeared. Nobody heeded her, and she did not choose to follow the returning party to Master Simon's house; but when my Lady Bedinfield, the rabble being dispersed,

issued stately from the family pew with her daughters behind her, she was graciously told that she might walk with them to the Hall. Perhaps my lady loved a little gossip as much as if she were a mere common person; and, if so, her waiting-woman was just the person to gratify her, not being in the least scrupulous that her intelligence should be fact rather than fiction.

"They are a pretty pair of lovers, I'm sure, and Rose's dress was uncommon gay;" said Lady Bedinfield, who had a mother's heart.

"Her cheek could not have looked fresher if it had been painted. Gilbert, your new wash for the face is quite useless;" querulously observed Mistress Elizabeth: "I am sure it dries the skin."

"Natural roses have the finest bloom," replied Lady Bedinfield, who had been a beauty herself, and was still a handsome woman. She sometimes had a little spite against her daughters for being so unmanageably plain.

"Rose Nicholl's bloom looks natural," said Mistress Gilbert with an air of sarcastic respect; "it looks even brighter than nature."

"You are jealous, Gilbert; we know all about the young suitor's indifference to black eyes when blue ones are willing to shine on him," returned Lady Bedinfield with a jolly laugh — she was above caring for her waiting-woman's feelings, and, besides, she had just been touched and pleased by the pretty scene in the church. A marriage always refreshed her, and made her think of her own youth.

Mistress Gilbert's face blushed lividly. That taunt was not needed to increase the deadly hatred she had conceived for Richard and his young wife. She dropped behind and would not answer when spoken to. Lady

Bedinfield called to her just as they were entering the house, and said in the same tone of mockery: "If Rose's beauty is all paint, why don't you put it on too, Gilbert?"

"I did not say it was all paint, my lady. I wish it were. It would be the less harm," replied the waiting-woman.

"If it is neither Nature nor paint, what is it?" asked Lady Bedinfield.

"It is devil's beauty. I saw his mark on her neck to-day," said Mistress Gilbert.

Lady Bedinfield laughed again, but this time in a less loud and assured manner. Scarcely any one in these very good old times was altogether free from the black plague-spot of superstition, and she was neither better nor wiser than her age. She entered her house in silence, and Mistress Gilbert, pacing her room that night vehemently, as a caged wild beast newly caught, rejoiced to think that she had dropped on her rival's fair fame the first deadly drop of that corrosive poison which she hoped ere long to see blacken and blast it utterly.

II.

THE apartments of the two sisters at Bedinfield Hall adjoined, and Mistress Gilbert passed from one to the other attending on the young ladies. There was company that day; especially, there was one young gallant named Sir Henry Cavendish, whom either of the girls would have been proud to captivate; for, not only was he handsome, brave, and accomplished, but he was also wealthy. Mistress Lucy stood before her mirror, fully

dressed; but there was dissatisfaction on her countenance, — she had small, delicate features, but her skin was cloudy, her eyes were lacking in brilliance. Mistress Elizabeth was even worse favoured; for her visage was long and lean as well as colourless, and her eyes were not so perfectly set as they might have been. The waiting-woman had suffered something from their tongues that morning, as her chafed and hurried manner betrayed.

“You will soon be of no more use to us than a mole, Gilbert. Can you not see how thick my complexion is to-day?” said Mistress Lucy, pointing at her own reflection in the glass; she always laid the blame of Nature’s defects on her abigail.

“Yes, Mistress Lucy, I see —” she hesitated a minute, opened the door to look into the passage, and then whispered, hurriedly, “I have a powder that I got from Mistress Turner in London; but if I let you have some, my lady must never know.”

“Ah, good Gilbert, I will not tell her; — speak low that Elizabeth may not hear. How does this powder affect one?”

“It preserves youth, makes the skin smooth, and gives it a bloom like a little child’s; but it is highly dangerous.”

“How dangerous? Is it a poison?”

Mistress Elizabeth, overhearing the mysterious whispering, crept stealthily behind her door, watched through a chink, and listened. The arrival of Sir Henry Cavendish had sown jealousy between the sisters.

“It is a mineral poison; but with care and in very small quantities, it is safe. In a week you would be as

fair as Rose Nicholl? Will you try it? or do you fear the risk?"

"O! I will try it. I would try anything to have a face like the young smith's wife; but promise me not to let Elizabeth have any."

Mistress Gilbert gave the required pledge, and then stole away to her own chamber to fetch the powder. The watcher waited for her return impatiently. When Gilbert re-entered the room, she brought in her hand a small box of ebony, which she opened with a key attached to a chain hidden under her ruff. Elizabeth listened breathlessly; but she could not quite catch all that was said. But she saw a small packet given to her sister, and by her, after a portion of its contents had been extracted for immediate use, deposited in her jewel box. How that taken out was used, she could not see; for Mistress Gilbert carried it to where stood the ewer and basin, and thither Mistress Lucy went to apply it; but she heard the waiting-woman say, "It will sink — mingle it well with the water;" so she conjectured that it was something to be swallowed, and determined that she herself would soon have a face as Rose, the smith's wife, if it only depended on taking the powder hidden in the jewel-box.

The application of the powder made no perceptible improvement in Mistress Lucy's face that day, and Sir Henry Cavendish was by no means charmed out of his senses; but, in the course of the week, there was certainly a change for the better, and Mistress Elizabeth — who had not yet found an opportunity to lay her hands upon any of the powder — became more and more eager to profit by its beautifying effects. One evening Mistress Lucy left her chain with the jewel-box key fastened to

it on her table, and her sister, who had never ceased to watch, availed herself of this chance to possess herself of a good portion of what remained of the powder. She immediately mixed a little of it with water, and drank it.

Very soon she was seized with pain, nausea, and sickness; but not so severely as to enforce greater caution in using the powder, for she repeated the dose daily. She suffered, but her skin acquired a clearness which it had never worn before, and this would have reconciled her to anything short of martyrdom. Her store being exhausted, and the key falling no more into her possession, she was obliged for a time to desist from her beguiling experiments. Mistress Lucy, however, still steadily continued her applications, — she used the water in which the powder was dissolved as a cosmetic, — but, though her complexion became clear, it did not gain the much-coveted bloom of the village smith's wife. Both the sisters would occasionally visit her in her cottage, and as Rose's beauty was on the blush always when they so honoured her, they went away each time more emulous and more envious than before. At last Mistress Gilbert's ebony box was empty, and no more of the powder could be obtained, until Sir Roger Bedinfield went up to London with his family, when the celebrated Mistress Turner might be induced to part with more at a price something like twice its weight in gold. Mistress Lucy was very impatient of this delay, but at length, though Mistress Turner was then in trouble, for the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower, a supply was obtained from another person, and the beautifying discipline was recommenced by the elder sister at once. Whether some more deadly ingredient was now mingled

with it, or it was unskilfully prepared, or, what is still more probable, Mistress Lucy used it incautiously, and too often, it now began to work on the muscles of the face, and the miserable girl awoke one morning with her mouth drawn on one side, and frightfully disfigured. Mistress Gilbert, terrified at her appearance, and rightly attributing it to the cosmetic, to shield herself from all suspicion, immediately exclaimed that her young lady was bewitched — and, as all new or ill-understood disease was, in these good old times, laid to supernatural influences, this was readily believed. But, bewitched or poisoned, poor young Mistress Lucy's days of vanity were past, and she would never charm Sir Henry Cavendish, or any gay gallant, with her face again. Mistress Elizabeth was so much shocked and grieved for some days that she forgot to profit by all the opportunities that, at this crisis, fell in her way for appropriating the powder; and, when she recovered her spirits, and looked for it in the jewel-box, she found that it had been removed. At first she thought of frightening Mistress Gilbert into giving her some by threatening to tell Lady Bedinfield; but caution interposed to remind her how many petty secrets of hers the waiting-woman could employ against her if so disposed. Therefore she determined to wait until they returned in spring to Hambleton, when she would endeavour to get at the precious store kept in the ebony box itself.

III.

Lady Bedinfield devoted herself like a good mother to her afflicted daughter; and, when they retired to their country-house — where the only amusements were such

as her health and spirits were far too broken to enjoy — they might be seen almost daily wandering through the shrubberies together, or sitting under the trees. Poor Mistress Lucy could not bear to be seen by the most intimate friends, or even by the villagers; and, the idea that she had been bewitched, gained ground fast.

Mistress Gilbert was one of those patient haters, who never balk themselves of their revenge by rushing upon it prematurely. To screen her own malpractices, she had said at first, that Mistress Lucy was bewitched; but it did not occur to her then to turn this to the furtherance of her schemes against Rose Nicholl. One lovely June evening, however, in passing by the smith's cottage, she saw a gathering of the village goodies, who told her that the White Rose, her detested rival, had just got a little son; and, a week or two later, she saw the young mother herself standing at her open window with the child in her arms, and the stalwart smith leaning in, making gentle paternal advances, to her great and laughing delight. Mistress Gilbert's heart felt like a lump of molten lead in her bosom at this picture. She stopped and looked at it wickedly over the hedge for several minutes, and then rushed rapidly homewards. Her plan was maturing.

A dreadful scene greeted her when she arrived: the house was in an uproar. Everybody running hither and thither, calling for this thing and that, in frantic haste. Mistress Elizabeth was ill, she was dying — dying in agonies; her shrieks could be heard half over the house.

"She is poisoned," said Lady Bedinfield, who was shuddering and weeping by her daughter's writhing form; but Mistress Gilbert, bending over the bed her

ash-grey face, said: "No, I have seen these convulsions before; she is bewitched, like Mistress Lucy."

Everyone in the room paused aghast with their remedies, but Lady Bedinfield said, "Who can pursue our family with such a relentless hatred? Whom have we any of us injured? There is worthy Parson Phillips coming to our aid; let him be admitted."

While the minister recited his prayers, Mistress Elizabeth died. "She has been poisoned," he also observed; but the doctor, not being able to name the drug that had killed her, solemnly countenanced Mistress Gilbert's idea, that she had been bewitched. The waiting-woman was not long in discovering where Mistress Elizabeth had found her fatal draught. Advantage had been taken of her absence to break open the ebony box and abstract the cosmetic powder. Too large an internal dose had done its work for ever.

From the time of her sister's death, poor Mistress Lucy's health also began fast to decline. She became subject to long fits of melancholy depression, and more than ever evaded seeing strangers. Still she would go out of doors, and her favourite haunt was a sunny knoll in the plantations, where she would sit for hours with either her mother or Mistress Gilbert. Any sudden noise: even the flight of a bird from one branch to another, would cause her to tremble convulsively, as if with overwhelming dread; for the poor girl had heard it said that she was bewitched, and the idea worked in her imagination until she believed it. It happened one morning while in the wood, as usual, that Rose Nicholl — with her baby in her arms on her way to the Hall, to show him to Lady Bedinfield, as she had received commands to do — passed within sight of Mistress Lucy

and the waiting-woman. Rose was singing as blithely as any bird, and never noticed the two under the trees; but Mistress Lucy began to shudder and cry out.

"Is it Rose Nicholl that has bewitched you, Mistress Lucy?" asked Mistress Gilbert earnestly.

"Yes, yes," replied the nervous creature, following the retreating figure with wild eyes.

"I always thought so! I saw the devil's mark upon her neck the day she was married," cried the waiting-woman, triumphantly.

When they returned home, Mistress Lucy told her mother that all her deformity and all her present illness had been inflicted upon her by the malice of Rose Nicholl, the smith's wife, and that the sight of her threw her into convulsions such as those in which her sister died. Lady Bedinfield was troubled, but suspicious. She consulted her husband, who was remarkable for anything rather than sagacity, and proposed to have Rose tried by one of the common prickers who made it their business to go from place to place discovering witches and bringing them to punishment. Sir Roger consented, and Mistress Gilbert having undertaken to produce a witch-finder, innocent, unconscious Rose was indicated to him as a suspected person; and, full of the importance of his terrible office, the pricker went to the smith's house, when he was at his forge. Master Simon also was away from home, and Rose, with her baby asleep in her lap, sat sewing diligently, like the good housewife and housemother that she was. The pricker obtained an entrance into the cottage by pleading that he had walked far and was tired; so the unsuspecting Rose bade him rest himself, and gave him some refreshment. Presently two of the village women sauntered in, osten-

sibly to see the baby, but in reality, by pre-concert with the pricker, to help in the examination. They all began to talk, and presently led the conversation round to the subject of witches and warlocks. There had been many hundreds of wicked and cruel executions in England during recent years for the crime of witchcraft, and Rose had heard of them, like others: indeed, a witch had been swum and drowned in Hambledon mill-pond within her own memory. She expressed great commiseration for this old woman, and said that she believed many unfortunates were the victims of the malice of their enemies, rather than real criminals, as was pretended. The pricker took umbrage at this remark, perhaps because Mistress Gilbert's bribe lay heavy on his conscience at the moment; and, thinking to daunt Rose, he exclaimed, that she herself was a notorious witch and evil liver, and he was there to prove it.

Rose started up; and, when the two women approached to lay hold on her, she broke from them, and rushed out at the door shrieking: "Richard, Richard, help me!"

The hammer was not going in the forge just then, and the smith heard her. Clutching a stout cudgel, he ran to the spot; and, while the two assistants decamped, he seized the pricker in a grasp like a vice, and, without waiting for explanation, proceeded to belabour him so soundly that the miserable official was likely to have a skin full of sorely-aching bones for a month to come.

When her husband paused, Rose said, bitterly weeping: "He is a witch-finder, Richard, and declares that I am a witch. He came here to prove it. O, where, where shall we fly? You know, dear husband, that I

am your own true wife, and no wicked witch. Don't you, love?" She clung to him beseechingly. In those good old times there were few ties of blood or of affection that did not break under this terrible accusation; but the smith loved his Rose dearly, and, having an intense antipathy to the manipulations of such odious gentry as the pricker, his wrath was so far increased by the idea that they might have been exercised on his young wife, as to find it indispensable to beat him again, and then to throttle him until he confessed that he had received a bribe from Mistress Gilbert to accuse Rose. A second shaking made him give up the instrument with which he proposed to prick for the devil's mark, which all witches bore on their persons. This instrument was a steel needle with a hollow handle, into which it retired under very slight pressure, coming out again when that pressure was withdrawn, so that though it appeared to run into the flesh, it in reality did not even break the skin; as the devil's mark could be pricked, as was asserted, without the witch feeling any pain and without blood following the withdrawal of the needle, this ingenious piece of mechanism answered every malicious purpose; and, with its lying witness, did to death many a poor innocent wretch; who, after conviction, was tortured into confessing every enormity that the diseased imaginations of wicked or superstitious examiners could devise. The smith was something of a mechanician himself, and immediately discovered the secret of the instrument, which he determined to carry to Parson Phillips. As luck would have it, the minister coming across the green at the moment, he hailed him to come in, and related what had been threatened against Rose.

"These common prickers are common knaves, I hope

you have —," the parson glanced significantly at the cudgel, as much as to add, "used it well!" The smith nodded affirmatively.

The pricker was trying to sneak off, but Richard stopped him, and said no — not until he had been before Sir Richard Bedinfield and had a judicial whipping as a cheat, and then a ducking by the village folk; who would be glad to give him one when they saw how very readily they might, any, or all of them, be proved witches and wizards by the painless trial of the pricking instrument. A good number of the rustics had gathered at a respectful distance from the cottage, waiting for the issue of what was going on there, the news of which the two women had taken pains to spread; and, when they saw the official dragged out by the smith, Parson Phillips following, and Rose looking out from the doorway, a few of them felt glad that the pretty white Rose of their village had escaped the dangerous trial; but when the smith came amongst them, and exhibited the trick of the witchfinder's needle, nothing would satisfy them except the summary administration of justice there and then; so the bruised wretch was hauled off to the mill-pond, ducked until he was half-dead, and then driven out of the village with hoots and execrations.

Mistress Gilbert was foiled of her revenge for the present; but, she said with a deadly tenacity: "Though he was not a true witchfinder, that does not make Rose Nicholl less a witch."

And the village began to look coldly on the smith's wife, and to avoid passing near her door, lest she should blight them and theirs with her evil eye.

IV.

THE very name of witch was fatal in those good old times. No one could long bear it with impunity; and this poor Rose well knew. To see herself hated and feared poisoned her life with a dread that the general feeling might extend itself to her husband, her father, and her child. Sometimes she wished she were dead, as the only way of escape from the indignities and cruelties which she had heard of as inflicted upon other women, probably as innocent of witchcraft as herself.

Six months after the visit of the pricker, Mistress Lucy Bedinfield died; and, the old report that she had been bewitched was revived, with the addition that it was Rose Nicholl, and Rose Nicholl only, who had laid upon her the spells that had destroyed her.

Every calamity that happened in the village was now laid to the charge of the smith's wife. If an old person died from age, Rose had bewitched him or her; if a baby perished from weakness, Rose had bewitched it; if a crop failed, Rose had bewitched the seed; if the corn, when heavy in the ear, was laid by violent rain, Rose had raised the storm; if a horse cast a shoe, Rose had bewitched the nails, or the hammer, or the anvil. Rose might look as innocent and pretty as she would, but popular superstition declared her to be a witch, and popular persecution used her as one.

Mistress Gilbert scarcely found her schemes march so quickly as she desired; but, an unexpected aid came to her from another quarter. A poor old woman at Whistlebank was tried for witchcraft, and, under her tortures, she gave a list of names of persons whom she said she

had herself seen at the Sabbath, or general meeting of witches and warlocks. She did not, at first, mention Rose Nicholl; but, the name being suggested to her, she also avowed that she had seen her, and no later ago than the previous Friday night. All the accused were immediately arrested, and carried before Sir Roger Bedinfield, and two other magistrates as sapient as himself. In vain did Richard Nicholl swear, that at the time his wife was stated to be present at the horrible mysteries of the witches' Sabbath, she was sleeping comfortably at his side; he was told that the devil deluded him by putting a semblance of her in her place, that he might not discover her nocturnal absences. The poor smith was nearly maddened; but, what answer could a man make to magistrates, who were so deeply in the fiend's confidence as to know every stratagem he employed; Richard was persuaded of his wife's innocence, but he could not prevail on others to believe in it; and, though Parson Phillips protested against the confessions of an old woman crazed by pain being received as evidence against Rose and her so-called accomplices, no attention was paid to his remonstrance, and they were all confined until the day when they were to be tried.

These must have been strange times that folks now call "good old times;" when a man, who loved his wife more fondly than anything else in the world, could ejaculate fervently, "Thank God!" when he was told that she was dead. Two days after poor Rose was thrown into prison, Parson Phillips brought these tidings to the smith, and said that he had leave to bring her body home, and give her Christian burial. Terrified at the accusation brought against her, deprived of her child and her husband, the young creature was seized with

fever, and died in her prison — by God's mercy both the parson and Richard thought, for she thereby escaped the doom of her companions in misfortune, against whose names stand in the criminal records of the time, the fatal words — "convict and brynt."

The smith brought his poor white Rose home on the third anniversary of their marriage; and, the next day, she was interred, with all the rites of the church, amidst the too late repentance of her persecutors. Master Simon and Richard stood by the grave in angry sorrow, and directly opposite them, with her wicked eyes, fixed on the smith's face, was Mistress Gilbert. As he was moving away, at last their glances met; the waiting-woman laughed triumphantly, and pointed downwards at the coffin with a significant air. Richard looked at her steadily for a moment, and then said in a deep, concentrated tone, which the hearers recalled afterwards as a tone of prophecy. "Ay, Mistress Gilbert, there lies the body of my poor Rose that you hated, and her spirit is safe in Heaven. You may laugh now, but you shall not laugh long. The day is near when your body shall raise a lowe that shall be seen from Whistlebank to Carnridge, and your spirit shall skirl to be heard from Hecklestone for three miles round." Mistress Gilbert only laughed the louder as she marched away.

But Richard Nicholl's words came true.

The Hecklestone was a tall block of granite, set up in Hambledon park, on an elevation about a hundred yards from the house. So long as it remained, there were two marks upon the top, which tradition said were made by the burning hands of Mistress Gilbert; she was set on fire accidentally, and, flying from the house, in her agony she ran up to Hecklestone, screaming, and

clung to it, blazing all over, until the light was seen "from Whistlebank to Carnridge, and her cries were heard for three miles round." People ran to her help, but the story goes that the fire resisted every effort to put it out. Mistress Gilbert was burnt to ashes; and, wherever the wind scattered them, says tradition, the ground was for ever after barren.

BOSCOBEL.

TURNING off at the little tavern (or hotel, as they love to phrase it in the old romances) at Ivetsey Bank, midway upon the highroad from Lichfield to Shrewsbury, and wandering across country for about a mile further southwards, one comes upon the ancient tenement of Boscobel, just as Charles Stuart came upon it for the first time in the grey of a celebrated September Saturday morning. It remains there to this hour intact, looking still like nothing else than a quaint old forest-lodge — with this sole difference, that its former chequer-work of black timber and white plaster has given place to the less picturesque appearance of a house uniformly cemented. Situated in the vicinity of Cannock Chase and Tong Castle, immediately upon the borders of Shropshire, and closely adjoining Staffordshire, this romantic and historical dwelling was secreted then in a lonelier site than it occupies in these more populous and more civilised times, being insulated, two hundred years back in what was then a mere wilderness. A windy, hilly, sandy common, forming the centre of the demesne, was surrounded by pleasant woodlands of considerable extent; the beauty of the whole sylvan solitude being sufficiently indicated by the Italian bosco-bello, otherwise fair-wood, giving the origin of its melodious designation. Ah, dear old Boscobel! I delight to haunt thee: clambering up

the steep, ramshackle staircases, peering through every dingy lattice, rapping the wainscots for the sliding panels with knuckles of untiring inquisitiveness, prying again and yet again into the secret places — the Priests' Holes — just as they were of yore in the days when Boscobel was the abode of Catholic recusants.

It signifies little enough to me, as I maunder about the place dreamily, who chances at the moment to be my cicerone, provided only I know my guide by long acquaintance to be thoroughly trustworthy.

No better-beloved attendant in a stroll at Boscobel have I, than Mistress Anne Wyndham of Trent, provided that very charming lady comes to me irresistibly in her rustling silks — the bearer of her one literary offspring, her queer, little, old-fashioned, prattling *Claustrum Regale Reseratum*! Supposing her ladyship to begin especially with one delicious sentence — a sentence I have come long since to know by heart — wherein she explains the reason of her turning bookmaker, to be, her loyal solicitude “that the truth of his Majesty’s escape might appear in its native beauty and splendour; that as every dust of gold is gold, and every ray of light is light, so every jot and tittle of truth being truth, not one grain of the treasure, not one beam of the lustre of this story might be lost or clouded; it being so rare, so excellent, that Aged Time, out of all the archives of antiquity, can hardly produce a parallel.”

There is something consolatory, remembering how Charles afterwards, when monarch, allowed the Dutch war-ships to ride insolently at anchor unmolested in the Thames, while he himself, by a more deplorable abnegation of his kingly authority, degenerated into the craven pensioner of Louis the Fourteenth — there is something

consolatory in the recollection that here at least, in the flush of his early manhood, Charles Stuart displayed personal valour and dignity. I rather like than otherwise to hear all about what one may call the heroic taking in which the young king was at the close of that desperate fight under the walls of old Worcester. I like to watch him, then, as he returns dusty and breathless from leading that last bootless charge of the cavalier troopers at Perrywood, and when with dented breastplate, and a broken plume, he was constrained, by reason of an overturned ammunition-waggon, to dismount at Sudbury Gate, entering the city on foot in the midst of the general confusion. There — putting off his heavy armour, and taking freshly to horse — do I not catch glimpses of him riding up and down the streets half-distracted? Imploring men and officers — vainly, vainly — to turn even then, and stand at bay in very desperation! “I had rather you would shoot me dead,” he cries out at last in anguish, “than keep me alive to see the sad consequences of this fatal day.” Fruitlessly, all this: the die is cast — the doom is spoken. And, by six of the clock on that autumnal evening, King Charles, heart-sore and dispirited, rides out of Worcester city by Saint Martin’s Gate, in the midst of Lesley’s cavalry, from which, however, his Majesty separates soon afterwards at Barbon’s Bridge, about a mile on the road towards Kidderminster. Accompanied from that point by nearly sixty of his principal adherents, a gorgeous retinue, including among them dukes, and earls, and other high patrician soldiers, the stripling monarch presses onward until some half-a-dozen miles from our Brummagem Brussels; when, drawing rein suddenly at Kinver Heath, the whole royal party halted, bewildered in the darkness as to their where-

abouts. Thence it is that a certain stalwart cavalier, one Charles Giffard, Squire of Chillington, undertakes to conduct the king towards a secluded tenement of his, an abode already favourably known to his Majesty, by repute, as the recent hiding-place of his valiant servant, the Earl of Derby, now a prisoner in the hands of the victorious republicans — to wit, the old wood lodge of Boscobel. An after-thought of precaution, however, slightly alters the direction taken by the fugitives. Having passed stealthily about midnight through the sleeping and shuttered town of Stourbridge — unnoticed even by a troop of Roundhead cavalry then stationed there — the king and his jaded escort arrive, towards daybreak on the following morning, Thursday, the fourth of September, at another little property of the Giffard family in those parts, the now famous house of White Ladies, so called from having been formerly a monastery of nuns belonging to the white-robed order of the Cistercians.

For safety's sake, the horse Charles rides is led clattering into the hall at White Ladies, and there, assisted to alight, the king takes leave at length of his devoted and disconsolate followers. Monarch now no longer — his last vestige of a court dispersed — the anointed fugitive finds himself committed by Squire Giffard to the care of a handful of his humble retainers, a family of poor labourers, mere woodwards, earning their daily bread by toiling with bill-hooks in the sylvan demesne of Boscobel. Previously to this judicious departure and dispersion of his splendid retinue, however, have I not remarked the unfortunate sovereign ridding himself in all haste of the dangerous symbols and evidences of royalty? Hurriedly, he has divested himself of his buff-

coat with its emblazoned star, the cuffs and bosom crusted over with heavy embroidery. He has unbuckled the garter with its device in brilliants. He has doffed the blue ribbon, and unslung from his neck the radiant George of diamonds. The George he has committed to the care of Colonel Blague; his gold he has distributed among his grooms and equerries; his jewelled watch he has given into the safe keeping of Henry, the Lord Wilmot, afterwards better known in one sense, and worse in another, as the gay and licentious Earl of Rochester. And now — vanished the king, scattered his court — there enters (after a pause) into the hall at White Ladies, where there are still visible the miry hoof-prints of the steed his Majesty has just ridden from Worcester, a very different figure indeed from that of the youthful sovereign — Charles Stuart no more: but simple Will Jones, another of the woodmen of Boscobel, a plain country-fellow. Altogether, about the squalidest figure well presentable. His flowing hair has been cut off any-how. He has rubbed his hands upon the back of the chimney in the little room which has been the scene of this singular and impromptu transformation, and afterwards has smeared his sooty fingers over his face by way of effectually completing his disfigurement. His dress is of the poorest and the raggedest. A green cloth jerkin, or jump-coat, so worn and bare that the threads here and there appear actually whitened. A pair of ordinary green cloth breeches, so long at the knees that the ends of them hang down below the garters. Over the threadbare jerkin, an old sweaty leathern doublet with pewter buttons; under it, a coarse noggin shirt — or, as the village-folk thereabout call them, hogging shirts — frayed at the collar and patched at the wrists; a garment supplied

from the wardrobe of one Edward Martin, a lowly menial at White Ladies. Will Jones retains still upon his feet his Majesty's white flannel boot-stockings, the tops of them snipped off, for being gold-corded and clocked with rare embroidery. But over the decapitated boot-stockings are cunningly drawn a footless pair of green yarn stockings, darned at the knees, and otherwise disgracefully dilapidated. Besides all these disguises, woodman Jones has for shoes the oldest and rustiest procurable — slashed at the sides for ease, but destined through those comfortless gashes to let in the mud and gravel abundantly. For head-covering he wears a very greasy old grey steeple-crowned hat, unadorned with either band or lining, the brims turned up, the battered circumference marked to the depth of two inches with perspiration. In the girdle of this lamentable spectre of a man there is thrust a wood-bill — token of his craft. In his filthy hand he carries an ugly thorn-stick, crooked three or four ways, and altogether perfectly well suited to his own distorted and miserable appearance. Looking askance at this wretched figure, I don't wonder in the least (though I have no admiration whatever for the gentleman himself), when I hear my charming familiar, Mistress Anne Wyndham, exclaiming dolefully, in allusion to King Charles's arrival, even in somewhat improved apparel, a fortnight or so afterwards, at Trent, that there "The passions of joy and sorrow did a while combat in them who beheld his sacred person: for what loyal eye could look upon so glorious a prince thus eclipsed and not pay unto him the tribute of tears?"

He is led out by a back-door, about a mile in the grey dawn into a little adjacent wood called Spring Coppice, by those brave-hearted wood-cutters, the Pen-

derells, armed with unsightly bill-hooks. Thomas Penderell — dead, fighting valorously for King Charles the First either at Stowe or Edgehill — had left five brothers. George had opened the door to the royal party on their approach to White Ladies, being a servant in that household. Humphrey, the miller, ground his corn at the old windmill in the immediate neighbourhood. John shines out upon us conspicuously among the whole fraternity as the one reputed to have taken the most trouble in behalf of the king, according to the account furnished to us by the faithful pen of Father Huddleston. Richard, surnamed Trusty Dick whenever he chanced to be spoken of afterwards, kept house with his aged mother, old Dame Joan, at Hobbal Grange. William Penderell, as tenant of the Giffard family, residing, with his wife, young Dame Joan, in the old weather-beaten house of Boscobel. The king, as dirty Will Jones, was conducted by the two latter Penderells into Spring Coppice about sun-rising on that lamentable Thursday — “and,” saith Master Blount, “the heavens wept bitterly at these calamities.” There it was that, seated in the drenching rain under the shelter of a tree, upon an old blanket, the king devoured the mess of buttermilk got ready for him in the adjoining cottage of Francis Yates (brother-in-law of the Penderells) at Loughtown — the sole refreshment the luckless Charless had tasted since his flight from Worcester, save a crust and a cup of canary, snatched during a momentary halt at a little tavern on the outskirts of the borough of Stourbridge.

Following the king at the close of that disheartening first day of drizzling and mizzling, I cross with him the threshold of Trusty Dick’s abode at Hobbal Grange, a little after nightfall. There Will Jones having heartily

quaffed a tankard of ale and devoured a morsel of coarse bread, we start with him upon his first expedition: bent upon crossing the river Severn, by means of a ferry-boat somewhere about Madeley, a village situated half-way between Bridgenorth and Shrewsbury; hoping thereby to escape into Wales and so at some early opportunity away on ship-board for the Continent. At Evelin Mill where, unknown of course to ourselves, a party of cavalier fugitives are secretly carousing — forth comes the dusty miller, bawling valiantly into the darkness:

“Who goes there?”

The challenge is altogether too much for us. Another minute, and we are scampering down the nearest turning, a miry byeway, the very Slough of Despond, where we flounder on distractedly over a veritable quagmire of ruts, until we pause at last, panting with chagrin and exhaustion: Will Jones, seating himself wearily under the hedgerow, declares he can go no further. Passing onward, however, in our dreary night-march, we creep at last by a back way into the house of one Mr. Francis Woolfe, a respectable old cavalier gentleman of Madeley; who, through fear of his residence being searched by the Puritan militia — two companies of whom, chance to be quartered upon the inhabitants of the locality — finds himself constrained to lodge his sovereign in a cosy barn. There we watch throughout the whole day following — Friday, the fifth of September — during which Jones luxuriously reposes his aching limbs upon a litter of straw behind the corn-sacks and hay-bundles, sheltering him from casual observation. Evening returned, we — on finding bridges and boats upon the Severn alike exclusively in the command of the Republicans — retrace our miserable footprints, again under Trusty

Dick's guidance. Cunning-handed Mistress Woolfe previously applying, it should be observed, the finishing artistic touch to the general degradation of the king's appearance, by staining his face and hands of a reeky colour, with the juice of walnut-leaves, rendering his Majesty independent from that time forth of mere soot-marks, by imparting to him the acceptable mask of a permanently tawny complexion. Through a wholesome dread of the terrible miller of Evelin, we ford, at a convenient distance, the stream that turns his mill-wheel; Charles, by reason of his being the most adroit swimmer, acting as pioneer. At John Penderell's cottage, where Richard looks in for a moment in passing, unexpected news is learnt, putting an end to yet another of the king's projected enterprises: the design by which his Majesty and Lord Wilmot had mutually proposed to journey by separate ways to London, there to meet at the Three Cranes in the Vintry, each asking for the other by the name of Will Ashburnham. It appearing, moreover, that my lord has happily found a secure asylum at Moseley Hall, Charles determines to delay no longer in pressing onward to the sheltering bocage of Boscobel, the place of his original destination. Moseley Hall being but eight miles from Boscobel: William Careless, also, the Hero of Worcester, deeming his own paternal home of Brom Hall, in the vicinity, somewhat unsafe, has taken to the leafy covert about Boscobel with the resolution of a bold freebooter. Companions still by his trusty henchman and my ghostly self, Charles hurriedly completes that dismal trudge of seven miles from Madeley — reaching the immediate neighbourhood of William Penderell's dwelling at the Great House, about five o'clock on the morning of the sixth, being Saturday.

Leaving his Majesty outside, Richard cautiously enters his brother's house-place to reconnoitre, speedily returning thence; accompanied by honest William and by gallant Careless, who at once bring the monarch within doors and there offer him the homage of their homely but not unwelcome attentions. One tenderly bathes his galled feet in warm water. Another partially dries the soddened leather of his shoes by holding red-hot cinders inside them with the fire-tongs. Goodwife Penderell the while appeasing the royal appetite with a slice of strong cheese and a hunch of brown bread, mixing thereupon a posset for him, made of thin milk and small beer — this, quoth the historian quaintly, as an extraordinary. Refreshed to some extent by these primitive luxuries, forth into the early morning sallies the king, together with Colonel Careless and the two Penderells.

It is a culminating point in the progress of the star of his Majesty's fortunes, the climax of these his romantic adventures. I follow these four figures watchfully, breathlessly, to their preconcerted rendezvous. It is the Royal Oak under the shadow of which they are now passing — at the distance of about two hundred yards from that old mansion of Boscobel — close to the common pathway, in a verdant meadow-field. It is a bushy, umbrageous, pollard oak, of rather considerable dimensions. Into this the two sturdy foresters help Colonel Careless first, the king afterwards. Charles drops one of his rusty buckets of shoes in his ascent, so that it has to be flung up after him for his dexterous catching, knocking down a shower of acorns and dry leaves, in the face of Trusty Dick Penderell. A cushion is fetched from the house and tossed up adroitly afterwards, by the aid of which the king contrives at last, with something

less of discomfort to dispose himself in a half-recumbent posture among the branches, his head resting upon the lap of Careless: the pockets of both of them crammed with bread and cheese, besides a flask or two of thin ale for the day's consumption. Everything arranged before daybreak, and the Penderells gone on their customary avocations, there the two secret watchers remain effectually hidden from passers-by, wiling away that livelong day for the most part in silence: poor jaded Will Jones dozing off at intervals, at the hazard of a tumble. If they talk at all, they speak only in stealthiest whispers; looking out vigilantly, ever and anon, from their impenetrable lair among the foliage, over the wide expanse of open ground.

Frequently, as the dreary hours drag on, they observe the glint of steel in the neighbouring thickets, and the gleam of scarlet through the gaps of the green brambles: patrols of the enemy searching eagerly in the covert for stray cavaliers. The wearisome noon lengthens into evening, while Charles and Careless — not much unlike the Charles and Careless of the School for Scandal — sit there high up in the oak-tree, munching their bread and cheese, and gurgling small beer out of their ale bottles; laughing silently in their sleeves as they note their baffled pursuers; amused, though anxious; ever vigilant. At length, when twilight is sufficiently deepened into obscurity, their cramped forms are relieved from durance; and, in a few scrambling steps they have descended. A substantial supper rewards them on their once more crossing the porch of Boscobel House; where after supper, I assist mine host, honest thumb-fingered William Penderell, in shaving his Majesty, and in cropping whatever hair remains on the crown of his head,

as close to the scalp as the scissors of Dame Joan will lie. After a comfortless night passed in a secret closet, five feet square; coiled upon a pallet less resembling the Bed of Ware than the bed of Procrustes, his majesty comes down the next morning betimes into the little farm-house parlour; and there, to the dismay of the king's rustic courtiers, the royal nose falls a-bleeding. I am amused now-a-days, to recollect, after the lapse of these two centuries, — when the once popular superstition about the regal touch is almost a mystery clean forgotten by the general multitude — to remember, that long years afterwards, the tattered handkerchief then drawn by Will Jones from his greasy pocket, a handkerchief, very old, very torn, very coarse in its materials, and lamentably daubed with blood from the king's nose, was religiously preserved as a Sovereign Remedy for the King's Evil.

It is Sunday morning, the seventh of September, and already the buccaneering colonel has celebrated the sacred day by sallying forth to an adjacent sheep-cote, upon — a hanging feat in those times, and indeed, for that matter, long afterwards — a memorable exploit of sheep-stealing. This expedition having proved eminently successful, thanks to the keen dagger and the broad shoulders of Careless, his Majesty falls to with knife and trencher; and, having sliced the mutton into collops, and pricked it delicately with the knifepoint, himself, with his kingly hands (the royalist narrator of the circumstance almost fainting in the record of it) cooks the meat cleverly with a frying-pan and butter, and afterwards, eats of it heartily for his breakfast. Throughout the remainder of the day Will Jones is either reverently engaged in his devotions (with the Colonel's matin felony

upon his conscience), or busy reading in a pretty summer-house in the garden; the stone table of which is still shown to this day as a most precious relic in one of the quiet rooms of old Boscobel. Brief time, however, has the king now for much indolent enjoyment. With the return of darkness the king's roving have recommenced.

Quitting Boscobel with a hobnailed bodyguard — consisting of the five Penderells and Yates, their brother-in-law — Charles Stuart, mounted upon the mill-horse of bluff Humphrey, sets forth. Leaving Boscobel, his advance from that time forth is almost uninterruptedly equestrian. His escort now conducts him by lonely bye-lanes to Penford's Mill, below Cotsall. Poor Will is nearly worn out by the rough jogging of the mill-horse: to the groaned-out complaint of whose joltering paces has not Humphrey, simple miller though he is, replied in those ready and courtly words of extenuation, "Can you blame the horse, my liege, to go heavily when he has the weight of three kingdoms on his back?" Dismounting at the point last-mentioned, Charles stumbles with a diminished suite across the midnight fields, until, after a toilsome tramp of three miles, through hedge and ditch, he arrives at a meadow called Alport's Leasom. Thence his servants are led away from him to the buttery-hatch of Moseley Hall by the owner of that mansion, Mr. Thomas Whitgreave, formerly a lieutenant in the army of the late sovereign. Meanwhile, Charles himself is making straight for a light in my lord Wilmot's chamber in that great house of Moseley: my lord, with a lighted taper in his hand, awaiting his Majesty's approach at the stair-foot leading to it, and thereupon conducting him up to his room, delighted.

Here King Charles in his sordid disguise is introduced by Lord Wilmot as "his master, and the master of them all," to the loyal host himself; and, with him, to a personage who, like himself, had originally been a gentleman volunteer in the late monarch's army, — one Father Huddleston, then a secular priest, afterwards a Benedictine monk, ultimately one of the queen's chaplains; and now generally reported to have been the priest who, thirty-four years later on, was smuggled by Chiffinch into the royal bed-chamber at Whitehall during the King's last moments, and who there administered to the dying monarch the last rites of the Roman Catholic religion. Having received the obeisance offered to him, the weary wight of a prince is refreshed with sack and biscuit. They lave his blistered feet — extracting from between the toes, little rolls of paper cruelly put there by some ill advice to prevent the galling they have only grievously increased. They exchange his wet clothes for others in every respect more comfortable — giving him in lieu of the old hogging shirt, a warm flaxen one belonging to Father Huddleston. Solaced by these then unwonted enjoyments — his heart glows anew, his hopes rise again within him as he sits musingly by the cheerful wood-blaze, watching its reflection in the Dutch tiles lining the hearth of that quaint old fire-place still preserved at Moseley Hall unchanged. "If it would please Almighty God," he says, with the sack yet relishing upon his lips, "If it would please Almighty God to send me once more an army of ten thousand good and loyal soldiers and subjects, I should fear not to expel all the rogues forth from my kingdom." With the walnut juice yet freshly embrowning his face and hands, with the black thorn

stick leaning in the chimney-corner there against the mantel-piece, with the billhook on yonder chair — his only weapon offensive or defensive — he still meditates wresting his subjects and his kingdom from the strong grasp of Oliver and his Roundheads! Shortly afterwards he has laid that close-cropped roundhead of his own upon the pillow vouchsafed to him at Moseley, and is dreaming calmly, perhaps, of having been victorious instead of vanquished in the fight at Worcester.

Having sojourned a couple of days under the hospitable roof-tree of Mr. Whitgreave — during which interval of anxious repose his Majesty has been constantly attended upon by Father Huddleston, while the chaplain's three youthful pupils, by name, Francis Reynolds, Thomas Palyn, and a boy-baronet, one Sir John Preston, have kept watch and ward from the garret-windows, unconscious of his dignity, yet calling themselves his life-guard — Charles at length, in the dusk of Tuesday evening, the ninth of September, resumes his perilous journey coastwards. Mistress Whitgreave, the venerable mother of the Squire of Moseley, filling the royal pockets with the oddest refection for a flying sovereign; even almonds and raisins, and sweetmeats.

Munching some of these condiments, as he mounts the saddle, and giving his hand to be kissed by his late devoted servitors — country gentleman and recusant priest, there kneeling in the grass by his stirrup to offer him their farewell reverence — Charles Stuart rides out of the orchard-gate, muffled in a warm cloak lent to him for the occasion, with a kindly thought, by Father Huddleston. Colonel Lane has now become the king's guide and sole attendant; the colonel's country-seat of

Bentley Hall being then their immediate destination. There the two wayfarers arrive, in due course, towards the middle of the night, and thence they take their departure again at daybreak on the following morning — his Majesty having here undergone in the interim his more respectable transformation. Colonel Lane, however, and King Charles journey onwards from this point by different though parallel routes to the more remote destination, the residence of Mr. George Norton, situated some three miles beyond the city of Bristol, and known as Abbotsleigh.

Thither pretty Mistress Jane Lane, the colonel's sister, is wending her way on a visit to her friend, Mistress Norton, under a pass available for herself and a single male attendant. That attendant being now impersonated in the character of the yeoman's son, Will Jackson, by the ready-witted sovereign. So accounted and so designated, Charles sets forth on that Wednesday morning, with his bonnie mistress behind him, on their doublesaddled charger, accompanied, after a similar fashion, by the lady's brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mistress Petre of Buckinghamshire. These being attended, moreover, by another relative, a royalist officer, named Lascelles. Colonel Lane meanwhile canters across the meadow fields skirting the highway in company with Lord Wilmot. Neither of them more elaborately disguised than by carrying each a hawk upon the wrist and a lure by the side; while, clustered at their heels are two or three gay little yelping spaniels. It is eminently characteristic of that most refined voluptuary that-was-to-be, Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, that he resolutely disdained any other disguise whatsoever; protesting, that he would look frightful in it.

Nevertheless, during one brief interval of their subsequent wanderings, his lordship, I remember, condescends so far to a little temporary masquerading as to assume the patronymic of one Mr. Barlow. And a sufficiently preposterous conjecture as to the Christian name selected, at the same time, may very naturally result from a recollection of the invariable prefix of Will to the royal pseudonyms of Jones, Jackson, and Ashburnham.

Rapidly following in the wake of the fugitives, I observe throughout, with increasing zest, the more notable incidents chequering the progress of the young king's adventures. I am at his elbow chuckling inaudibly as he stands by the little village forge in Warwickshire (his mare having cast a shoe) and holds the hoof for the garrulous smith, who gossips with him as he files and hammers, about that rogue Charles Stuart, protesting that the fellow deserves hanging more than the rest for bringing in the army from Scotland. Another while I hearken again to that mysterious warning-cry of the old beldame gleaming among the barley stubble by Wotton — "Master, don't you see a troop of horse before you!" — just as I come clattering, cheek-by-jowl with the king, through the midst of a squadron of Republican cavalry halting there to refresh their chargers by letting them crop the grass by the wayside. I am in the kitchen at Mr. Tombs's of Long Marston, four miles beyond Stratford-upon-Avon, when the cookmaid rails at my liege for his awkwardness in fumbling over the meat-jack; she having asked him to lend a hand in winding. I tarry together with Mistress Norton's maid, Margaret Rider, by the bedside of stripling farmer Jackson, while he leans there,

propped up on the bolster — pale with fatigue and seemingly to my companion just recovered from the ague — sipping the carduus posset she has brought him as a sudorific. I am momentarily dismayed myself, upon the discovery of the king by sagacious Mr. John Pope, the butler at Abbotsleigh, though speedily reassured, it is true, by the candid fervour of his protestations of faithfulness.

After a delightful night's repose at Mr. Edward Kirton's mansion of Castle Cary, near Burton, I am exhilarated by a refreshing gallop through the sweet morning air over to Colonel Windham's house, at Trent. I peer over the king's shoulder out of the window of his hiding-place, there remarking with him the boisterous assemblage in the churchyard below us, where the Puritans are broaching casks of ale and lighting bonfires tumultuously in celebration of his supposed demise, hearing him sigh to himself, as he turns from the lattice, Alas, poor people! I am startled hardly less than he himself, when the ostler in the inn-yard at Bridport greets him with, surely he has seen his face before, the varlet actually then, in truth, trembling upon the brink of recognition. Yet, more startled am I, however, when another tavern-groom (ostler at the inn at Charmouth) taking my Lord Wilmot's horse round to the neighbouring forge for the purpose of getting a cast shoe replaced, has his suspicions roused by that shrewd observation of the keen-witted artisan, Hammit, the blacksmith, "This horse has but three shoes, and they were all set in different counties, and one in Worcestershire."

I am still pertinaciously beside his Majesty, when under the guidance of Colonel Robin Philips, he carries

behind him, on the pillion, a new lady-mistress in the fair Juliana Coningsby; and, when stopping to dinner at the Mere, the presumed hobbygroom is challenged by jovial Boniface with the cavalier countersign, "Art thou a friend of Cæsar?" and answering as one might conjecture, "Yea!" is pledged to his own health roysteringly.

I pass the whole of one day of October upon Salisbury Plain, in company with Charles and Robin, entertaining ourselves, among other idle amusements, with reckoning up the colossal fragments of Stonehenge.

A week later, I am crossing those same downs a-foot with his Majesty, attended by burly Dr. Henchman, canon of Salisbury, pursuing our way with pleasant converse until we come by pre-arrangement upon a little group of friends at Clarendon Park Corner, there loitering about for us, with greyhounds in leash, under pretext of being out simply on a coursing expedition.

Finally, I am observantly entertained at the little inn, still discoverable by the curious, in the now most fashionable of all our brilliant wateringplaces, then no more than the small fisher-town of Brighthelmstone — when vulgar-minded, honest-hearted landlord Smith passing behind the king, and suddenly kissing his Majesty's hand, then resting by accident on the back of a chair on which he was leaning, whispers to his liege in a fluster: "God bless thee wherever thou goest! I doubt not before I die but to be a lord and my wife a lady." Whereat his Majesty laughs, and to the end that he may stop that dangerous talk betimes, through fear of eavesdroppers, strolls away into another apartment.

Thence, from that humble tavern at Brighton, I go forth with the royal party about four of the clock on

the morning of Wednesday the fifteenth of October, for the last brief march before embarkation. Having within the interval occupied by these adventures run the gauntlet of the enemy through eleven counties, having passed undetected more than two-score days and nights of perilous uncertainty, unbetrayed by more than two-score faithful adherents, staunch to the last, in spite at once of terror and temptation. Trudging along the coast-line as far as the little village of Shoreham, I watch the king, still in the sad-coloured suit of Will Jackson, and with him my Lord Wilmot, still to the end blazoning it out haughtily in velvets and gold embroidery — take boat about seven of the clock, the tide then serving, and so on board a tiny bark in the offing, a collier of no more than sixty tons burden, commanded by worthy Captain Nicholas Tattersall. A pleasant excursion across the channel with fair winds, and we are landed in Normandy, being taken on shore in the cockboat on Thursday the sixteenth of October, one thousand six hundred and fifty-one, at Feschamp, near Hayre-de-Grace.

THE BLOOD OF THE SUNDONS.

I.

SEATED, one dark December night, in the room known as the Amber Room, at Holm Hollies, with shelves of pedigree, and charts of pedigree, and titles of honour and emblazons circling me about; with every step in that golden and ivory stair which led me back up to the Conqueror's day, made out brightly and distinctly, I dreamt of the glories of the House of Sundon, of which I, Piers, was the last surviving representative. Last, indeed, of a line of noble gentlemen and peerless ladies, whose pictures hung below in the old dining-room, and whose broad lands, won by their good swords or brightest smiles, stretched away for many an acre — fairest prospect from the window of the Amber Room. On the shelves were Memoirs with noble prints by Strange and Holler of the Sundon Worthies: men who had done as famous service to the State in politics, as in armies and navies; whose blood had never been contaminated by mean alliances. "The purest stock in England," my father said many and many a time over; and never with such satisfaction as when he turned his back upon a dazzling manufacturing alliance, freighted with two hundred thousand pounds. Those moneys would have come in usefully enough: the wild animal known as the Wolf having even then presented himself with terrible fre-

quency at the door. But my father kept his face steadily away from the manufacturing Dalilah.

There had once been such a thing as a Baron Sundon, of Holm Hollies, in the county of Dorsetshire; which title of honour had, by a cruel heraldic trick, slipped away from us long since. With vain trying to lure it back again, many a broad acre and tall tree had slipped away after it, and so had given encouragement to that wolf. In fact, this fruitless striving had left me sitting in the Amber Room, well nigh a poor man; but wealthy enough in that one hope: that faithless *ignis fatuus*, or Will-o'-the-wisp. More broad acres, more timber, had to go for feeding and keeping alive of that fire. Poleaxe, Herald and Pursuivant at Arms, was working the thing for me, and was never so confident as now. If I could only help him a little by speaking to some of the great ones! Ah! if I could; but the great ones were not my friends. I was too stately a chief for that; and the pure blood running in my veins would not let me come down to such wooing. So Poleaxe must work it through of himself. I knew nobody; saw nobody. The Sundons of the olden time were company enough for me. I knew well enough what the folk about, thought of me. A stiff, proud churl, who was setting himself over his neighbours. They were not good enough for him, forsooth! Nor were they. Had they come to my board, I should have set every man of them below the salt. Well, no. There was one person who was not to be set below the salt. Sir Thomas Hackleton the newly-made Baronet, and retired merchant. Newly-retired also — I must say it — from the leather business. In spite of their impure blood, neither he nor his little daughter was to be set below the salt.

II.

For this simple reason. He had bought and paid for a high place, and could therefore sit as high as he liked. He might come in at his own hours and strut through my rooms with his vulgar hands behind his own vulgar self, and mentally appraise the old pictures on the walls, the old furniture, the old plate in the chests below. That is to say, he had full claim and title to do this; for he had advanced money, and had bought off hostile people who would have verily sacked the place, stripped the walls, and melted down the wrought gold and silver. But for him there would have been auctions of the handsome furniture and effects. The drawing-room furniture, of exquisite design and antique pattern, the rich hangings, the unrivalled collection of articles of vertu (for which the well-known taste of the proprietors was a guarantee, &c.) the fine buhl cabinets, the matchless porcelain, — all these articles, set out in sweet and unctuous periods in the catalogue, would have the honour of being submitted to public competition by their obedient servant, Provincial Rostrum. Such an opportunity for collectors of choice objets d'art might never occur again. This went within a hair's breadth of being the anthem at Holm Hollies. The nobility and gentry went near to being summoned by sound of bell at the gate and choristers in green baize aprons.

The ugly wolf had actually made entrance disguised in a Jewish mask, with a red comforter on, and thick knobbed stick under his arm, and was busy, pen in hand, making inventories, and setting his mark on all things. He was for eating up all things in the house, that scowling Israelite, and was not to be put off this

time. Writ, sir, signed by high sheriff of the county — fieri facias — levari issued — a distringas — and the rest of their jargon.

I was running about distractedly — being then young in years and fresh from school — not knowing whither to turn, with my father lying sick up-stairs, almost in the extremity of death. The wolf was busy with his work, and had well nigh run his ink-horn dry; when, of a sudden, there entered, quietly, this newly-made baronet, who took the creature with the red comforter to one side, and spoke words to him. There was no vulgar obtrusion of his money; no ostentatious thrusting of his purse upon me. The thing was done as though a gentleman had had the handling of it.

The wolf went his way satisfied; but we had only shifted masters. We had only gotten a smooth upstart, instead of wolf Moses: a common trick, you see, with all these fungi, that have sprouted from the night before only. They know full well we would not — could it be helped — let one of them within a rood of us; and so, 'tis likely enough, they will take this shabby fashion of laying us under obligation to help them to rub skirts with gentle blood.

There were no reciprocal hospitalities, or even courtesies, in my father's time: but an unaccountable cloud of reserve. It was as though there had been the ghost of some ancient family feud hovering between them: a ghost not yet laid, or likely to be laid. My father would growl to himself as he read in provincial prints of provincial honours paid to mushroom dignity; of chairs being taken by mushroom dignity; of subscription lists being capped munificently by mushroom dignity. In contrast to which, that old excellence of birth, unballasted by money-bags,

was held cheaper: people, gently pushing past him with excuses to reach to the better man of the two. This was all so much gall and vinegar to the man of pure blood; but pure blood without money at its back. The more so, as there came to be no immediate means of getting the chain from our necks. Once, indeed, full half of the debt had been gathered, and then a bank broke. Said my father, at last, when I importuned him: "Let the fellow wait like other tradesmen!" Still we had to welcome him cordially, and get up abundant show of smiles and hearty taking of his plebeian hand. And here, again, in all honour and fairness, must it be written, that this person showed no sense of his hold on us: no familiarity or undue presuming: never putting in claim for that money of his, save indirectly by this coming over to look after his debtors. It made my father rage and grind his teeth with fury, that periodical coming up the avenue; and, I do believe, the last and sweetest act of his life was one little bit of triumph over this Leathern Baronet. There had been a fund raised for operatives in distress and out of work; and it was said Sir Thomas Hackleton, Baronet, would head the list with one hundred pounds. No doubt he would. It was no more to him than one hundred halfpence.

Now, to us had been coming importunate letters from certain carriage builders who had furnished us, some years before, with a state coach, blazoned out with armorial bearings, as was fitting persons of our quality. This thing had been done by way of patronage to certain provincial builders plying their trade in the neighbouring town: and the provincial builders must break or go to the wall, they said, if they were not helped. Still these were loathe to inconvenience so noble a family. There-

fore with difficulty had been got together — scraped from Heaven knows what sources — some two hundred pounds or so, which was to go to the whining builders. When, lo! comes this news of operatives out of work, and Sir Thomas Hackleton, Leathern Baronet, heading the list! My father, ill in bed of his last sickness, went nigh to dying at once of it; but, during a tossing night, he lighted with triumph on the notion of diverting the coach builders' monies to the extinguishment of Leathern Baronetcy, and so it was done. Builders went to the wall, true to their word — being swamped in the crisis — but the blood of the Sundons was glorified through the length and breadth of the county. For it was there, to be read in the local prints, that plain Piers Sundon, Esquire, headed the list with two hundred pounds — which last act sent him away from this earth quite contented and happy.

III.

ALICE was the name of the merchant's daughter. A fair-haired, blue-eyed damsel, with a strangely spiritual expression; with finely cut features, very hard to conceive as having come of plebeian parentage. She nearly resembled those inspired faces which a famous French artist (by name Aïry Schœffer), who has painted Dante and Beatrice, has the gift of fixing upon canvas. A very sweet, quiet-tempered child, full of gentleness and trust. In short, I had been in love with her from the first day I saw her.

This had been at full work long before my father's death: so there had been fine room within me for play of two contrary feelings. Rare tugging there was between them which was the stronger. I inherited to the

full aversion to mushroom baronetcy sprouting where it had no title to sprout; but not so much personal hatred of the man. And then there was that golden-haired maid — delicate shoot, growing in lithe wind beside him, and flowering over all that crookedness. She was always, as it were, between me and him. And so I brought myself to tolerate his company — rather his sphere. For he seldom obtruded himself; being a man of little speech and mostly busy with his place and improvements. A worthy man, all the country gentlemen called him; of sound sense and long head. That is, all save Continental Lord Willoughby, who sneered at the man perpetually — that is, when he came home for short visits from foreign parts. He made himself pleasant on the Leathern Baronet's house and general taste. "Beautiful paint, sir," he would say. "Like the red houses in the pantomimes. You and I, who have fine clarified blood, could not so much as conceive such monstrosities. See what these plebeian souls generate!" With that he would go off to foreign parts again (he had a villa somewhere on some Italian river), and would not come back for a year or more.

The Hackletons lived in a staring spick-and-span country house, of dazzling vermilion, and as like a small factory as can well be fancied. It shone with plate glass and white picking-out upon the vermilion, and went by the name of the Villa Reale; a name snatched up in Sir Thomas Hackleton's little foreign touring. The plebeian tone of the man slipped out unconsciously at every turn. It was never Villa Reale to me; but always The Factory, in plainest terms.

Yet, with that humble manner of his, and unobtrusive carrying of his baronetcy, I felt, on the occasion of

my poor father's death, that it would be no disparagement to pure blood, to accept his pressing offer of a week's stay at the Factory.

I was glad to be set free from the house of mourning: glad, too, to be free from distracting persecution of bills pouring down on me, in a flood. People in the hall; people at the gate; surly, and talking loudly. To say nothing of the daily post. So my heart was heavy enough, in all conscience, and a change of that kind would be welcome. Besides — and he suggested this humbly — I might like to talk with him concerning the disentanglement of my affairs; which were in a very cheerless condition; and, he being pretty well used to business, I might, perhaps, find him of some little use. So he put it, hesitatingly. To say the truth, I had been shrinking away from bold, unassisted, looking of money difficulties in the face, which had now become absolutely necessary, — if the depopulation of noble aristocratic timber was ever to stop. So, I shook his hand thankfully, and said I would go to him to the Factory for one week.

The Vermilion Factory was all gilt inside, wherever there was a projecting point to hold gold leaf: cornices, frieze, doors, windows, stair-balustrades, all blazing in the sun. Golden-legged chairs, golden-legged tables, and mirrors by the rood. Prodigious gardens: a prodigious extent of greenhouse-glass, covering in the rarest exotics. There was a pedantic Scotch gardener with numerous assistants. All these glories were shown to me by the yellow-haired maiden in her own silent undemonstrative manner; the merchant baronet scarcely appearing at all. A strange influence was shed upon me from the golden locks as I followed; not so much from voice as from

manner. Those pale eyes were looking out eternally with the French painter's divine light. And so I followed all day long, from plant to plant, wherein she delighted most: from picture to picture, and from book even to book. It was a snatch from that old story, which is as old as the world. She was wonderful for a plebeian maid.

IV.

On the second day I thought we might try a little business; and the tin boxes, which had come over on a visit, were brought out and explored. These boxes were labelled outside, with the style and title of the Ancient Family; and there were disgorged upon the study floor, mortgages in great bundles, deeds of trust, settlements and indentures, between Hebrew Levi of the one part (needless to say who was of the other part) accompanied by a light flotilla of post-obits, bills, and their brethren, bonds, with judgments in the penal sum of double the amount, duly confessed and marked in High Courts. The humble plebeian had his spectacles on, and went at the work bravely for as much as three good hours; while I roamed in and out uneasily; dividing myself evenly enough betwixt the tin boxes and the yellow-haired maiden. The end of it was, he could not see his way, in the least; but, from mere dim suspicion, and a sort of surface glance, he could gather enough to say that things were dark, very dark indeed.

Some one came to dinner. A hook-nosed, sleek-haired fellow, with a strange likeness to the merchant; at whose entry I fumed and scowled. Because, forsooth, I let myself out on a visit to those below the level, is there

to be unfair advantage taken of such condescension, and is such fry as this to be brought in to stare, and help the host's glorification? It was only his own brother, just come for a dinner; a long-headed man, I was told. He was a solicitor, and talked of his trade openly, and in a smooth way. It irked me exceedingly to find myself compassed about by such company. I was fallen low enough, indeed — enough to wish that my poor father might not be looking from his fresh grave.

"By the way," said the baronet, after dinner, in the most natural way in the world, "here is my brother, a lawyer, who can set you right about those papers. He has extraordinary experience. He is concerned — confidentially — for my Lord Willoughby of the Park."

My father had revered my Lord Willoughby's family from a child, and had made me reverence it too. I looked on the hook-nosed with a certain interest now.

His advice and experience were at the service of such a friend of his brother's as I was; unprofessionally, be it understood. This offer was scorned, as was only fitting it should be. No offence; there was no offence, he said, intended. As I was such a friend of his brother's family, he merely thought there should be no stiffness, or anything of that sort — that is —

I coloured up, to flaming tint. This fellow, then, had been let into the secret of the debt: what was to be expected from the precious plebeian keeping it had got into? "Brother," said Sir Thomas, from the other side of the table, "you must not put things in that way. Mr. Sundon and Mr. Sundon's father have known of me for some years back. But I have no claim on Mr. Sundon or Mr. Sundon's father for such high consideration as would entitle me to the honour of what you call intimate

friendship. So please do what you are required to do, in the way of business."

The flaming tint, on this, subsided. That very night the tin boxes were turned up-side down again, and the attorney went in head foremost among the papers. All that night he was at the work, and came up late with news that he would give an answer on the morrow.

The tune of that answer was something to this effect. — When the threatening company of mortgages, bonds, judgments, came to have their heads set together, and were duly polled, and placed in their order, the upshot was: Say, in round numbers, one hundred thousand pounds of liabilities, all pressing relentlessly with foreclosure power; besides smaller fry that could be staved off for the present. On the whole, about the net value of the estate, if sold. Sold it must be presently, said Hooknose smoothly, — under foreclosure power.

V.

THIS was a blow, the like of which I had not reckoned on, in the worst hours of despondency. I was a pauper at that moment; but an aristocratic pauper. Hebrew gentlemen and wolves innumerable (not troubling themselves with sheep clothing now), would be down upon me presently. One ugly Foreclosure, the result of a bill filed in Chancery, was actually in force at that instant. Hebrew Levi had only to cut the thread, and the sword was down upon Damocles. I could have fallen at full length on the rich carpets of the baronet. I might come upon the parish at once, an unredeemed pauper. Then, that rare notion of working out the ex-

tinct peerage! Why, at that moment there was a letter lying in my pocket freshly arrived from Poleaxe, herald at arms, full of wonderful hopes and encouragement, but craving money earnestly for the searches. In fact those same searches would, he averred, be at a standstill for evermore, unless alimient were forthcoming promptly. What precious likelihood there was of it now!

That very night, out of this trouble of mind and brain-racking, was born a sort of light fever, which kept me tossing in bed for several days, uttering wandering talk concerning paupers and Union Workhouses; with a disturbed view, at more composed intervals, of a golden-haired maiden drawing near and fading off into clouds; now bringing drinks and doing other angel's work. But it was only a light fit after all; lasting but three or four days. Then, strength came back, and I was abroad again. There was a peck of Hebrew letters lying waiting for me, with one ugly missive from Ben Levi, stating that Foreclosure, Esquire, was on his road down, unless indeed I should stay him on the journey. Equity of Redemption would stand to me, and might beard Foreclosure still. But how was he to be bought?

Hooknose was on the ground, accidentally it would seem, and was had into council. The mushroom Baronet was not present. Hooknose said it was growing serious, and that he had looked again through the papers. He had been rather under, than over, the figure, had Hooknose. It was very, very bad — about as bad a case as had come within his professional experience; and, for the life of him, he could not see his way to extrication. By compounding and proper paring, something over the debts might be got out of the sale.

"That is your comfort, Mr. Hackleton;" I said, "but your cure?"

"Wait," said Mr. Hackleton, "there is more to say. You have a good name and good blood. Precious refined blood. Taking it at so much per drop — and I believe the human form contains a very large quantity — you might go with it into the city and get money for it," quoth Hooknose, dryly.

"And eternally corrupt it!" I said.

"No," Hooknose answered, reflectively, "I don't see it in that way. Seriously, sir, you might improve it. Mankind is pretty much under the same laws as other animals. Judiciously crossed, the breed improves. Perhaps the English aristocracy owes its good physical condition to frequent intermarrying with the commonalty. Look at the old French nobility! they married in and in amongst themselves, until they got to be a sort of species of human spider. Here is rank heresy for you, outspoken from the mob!"

My lips curled at this speech of the low man. The man was familiar. But I had need of him.

"Improve by deterioration!" I said, with a kind of scoff. "Unlikely chemical process!"

"Most true, Mr. Sundon," he said. "But this chemistry of blood has the queerest laws. Now, only think! For my brother and myself — who I really believe have come in direct line from those gaol birds whom Romulus got together for his Rome — for us to have thoughts on pedigree and descent, and blood, seems ridiculous. Yet I often turn such things over in my mind, when at work — say, when making out a bill of costs!"

I should like much to have known, was this man

sneering or in downright earnest? Bill of costs! true plebeian illustration.

"Yet," he continued, making a hollow cup of both his hands for his chin, "yet, if I could make out a tree up to the gaol birds, should I not be an out-and-out patrician? The finest blood in the country. Come! There's logic for you!"

What odd notions were these concerning gaol birds and pedigree! What was the man at?

"As I take it," Hooknose continued, "it is the pure ascertaining — the bare holding out of a torch to light all the steps of your pedigree, that makes the thing so glorious: how queer, then, if his torch showed a man — say my Lord Willoughby's furthest ancestor — swinging from a gallows. Perhaps Sally, the scullion below, has about as good a lineage as my lord; only, poor soul, she can't afford to have it traced!"

I felt the old curl upon my lip. The broad, coarse way he had of putting the thing!

"We had best return to business," I said; "we were speaking of money."

"O, certainly," he answered, with extraordinary humility, "certainly! certainly! These are not topics for such scum as mere Hackletons: folk born under a counter. But to come to business again. There is that barony of yours — barony in nubibus — supposing you came into it: you could have that bill done in the city too."

"There must be money," I said.

"Your chances are fair enough, I am told," Hooknose answered; "but rest assured that this is the only plank left to you."

Hackleton said no more; but his words left their mark.

Without travelling up so far as the city, what if I looked round me within a circle bounded by the Hackleton domain? This I spoke to myself, sinking into a chair in the spick-and-span Factory study. Take hold of the plank! Take hold of the plank, held out by a saffron-haired mermaid, who has now floated past the window!

That morning from my own confidential attendant I had heard abundant details concerning her conduct during my three days' weary tossing. How she had been hovering about, with anxious tearful eyes and saddest expression. Could the clouds have been parted for the sick man, he would have seen the face wrought by the divine painter, looking out with gentlest sympathy. Take hold, Hooknose said, take hold of this plank. Take hold of it! said also scowling Foreclosure. Foreclosure might be expected at any hour; nay, at this moment he might be on the ground in possession. The bare notion set me all a-trembling. And yet, outside, among the garden bowers, might be found balm and panacea for all troubles. Rescue from difficulties — salvation — cure! What if there was one little grain of truth in those odd, strange, ridiculous speeches of Hooknose? Take hold of the plank! And with that cry within me I slowly rose, and passed out hesitatingly into the garden.

With trembling and astonishment Golden-Haired heard my heart-sent, earnest vows. With even something like a cry, too, hastily suppressed.

"Have you thought well over this?" she said. "O have you thought well of it?"

She was quite scared and dazed: "It cannot be," she exclaimed, and was for flying away. There is a pro-

gramme usually on these occasions, so I took this to be a first step in the business, and stopped her.

"You love another," I said, thinking of the old hackneyed form.

No, it was not that, she could assure me, still ready to sink upon the walks. She never looked so like to the divine painter's faces as then.

"Better not to mention it at all to her father," she said. "Forget the words I had spoken altogether. That dazzling lineage of mine — the great ancestors —"

Ah, yes! I had nearly forgotten them altogether. The maiden of low degree had swept them away from my brain.

Shall it be confessed that, as difficulty seemed to show itself, I seemed to see Foreclosure standing behind with his arm up, quite infuriated? A sudden terror of him filled me, as I found this last chance of escape slipping from me.

It was incomprehensible. Such a wooing garden scene was never thought of before. There was some one coming down the walk most inopportunately.

A servant with a letter: having ridden over from Holm Hollies with word that I was badly wanted there. A sudden coldness at my heart. Had Foreclosure come? I departed hastily, promising to be back on the morrow. It left that garden scene a riddle unguessed.

At the Holm Hollies what I had been wanted for, I found to be gone. Certain strange men had wanted speech of me, who, not finding me, said they would look for me over at the baronet's.

VI.

THE shape of the Amber Room was octagon, and there were large squares of faded silk, once of a rich golden yellow, let into panels all round. There was abundance of black oak framing about these panels: sprouting in knobs and foliage here and there, and converging in a huge boss at the centre of the domed ceiling. There was an old chair and an old oak escritoire, where I sat and wrote; and where, too, my father sat and wrote; and where, too, those who had been before him had sat and written also. There were shelves laden with pedigree books; and there were great oak chests open, on the floor; whence overflowed more pedigree documents, deeds, and patents — a great heraldic litter. Fronting the escritoire at which I was sitting, late at night, was a portrait of the last Baron Sundon, of Holm Hollies, a fine dignified gentleman, in a flowing periwig, green velvet coat, and star — the pillar and glory of the family; great in the state, greater in the county — with an aristocratic curl on his lips, and full, smooth cheeks, made fuller by the wig; bluish, aristocratic fingers nestling under his lace frill. Those bluish fingers advanced out of the rich lace frill, only to touch the fingers of the nobility; for he was conscious of our prodigious purity of blood, and would have borne that his precious family flesh should be torn with hot pincers, sooner than have it defiled by plebeian touch. And now, for some century and a half, had he been looking down out of his mellow-toned background at those who came after, and sat at the oaken escritoire. Perhaps he might be taken as watching eternally, lest any of his race should go astray, and slur the stock he had been so precious of.

Well, it was now late at night; and, in this very Amber Room I had been sitting in the darkness, until the time had crept on very close to midnight. What had been my entertainment during those weary hours would not be hard to conceive; dimmest fancies and heaviest forebodings; sad thoughts of how this precious birthright was departing from me, being basely sold, in fact, for money. There I sat, in the darkness, until the clock began chiming outside, preparatory to striking the hour, and then it pealed out slowly twelve o'clock.

I went to light the lamp, lit it, and came back again to the old escritoire, sitting down fronting the first Baron Sundon, in his green velvet coat and ruffles. The dull light of the lamp played upon the smooth, full cheeks, and showed him looking down placidly and unconsciously upon (it was not too hard a word) his unworthy descendant. Then I fell to thinking if I should have chanced to have been son of his, or had he lived up to this night, and I had the task before me of breaking to him news of this foul blot; I began thinking how the fair, placid cheeks of the first Baron Sundon would have been contorted with rage; how he would have gone nigh to bursting a precious bloodvessel; how he would have torn those spotless white ruffles; how he would have cursed me, and turned me out of doors; how he would, in all human probability, have died of it. For that matter, there was my poor father, now in the Family Vault; and I could speak for a certainty as to how it would have affected him. It would have sent him down to the Family Vault prematurely. Why, even I could see the old Lord of Sundon frowning down on me, just as the clock chimed two quarters PAST twelve.

VII.

Sundon village church was full of Sundons. It was worth coming miles to see. It was a perfect heraldic panorama: every aisle and corner being crowded with tombs and effigies of dead Sundons. There were Sundons in armour, and Sundons in flowing wigs, with their hands in praying postures on their breasts, lying out stiffly on great stone tombs: there were Sundons kneeling on cushions in pairs together, and with frills about their necks, all wrought out in snowy white marble.

All that august company lie together beneath the low-roof church, which has a short, thick tower outside, heavily cased with ivy; and whose walls slant outward quite out of all shape. The long roof seems to start almost from the ground, those old slanting walls being not beyond a few feet high, save, indeed, where they rise suddenly to make room for a tall window, filled-in with coloured glass of pale faint tint — faded saffron and green — over which, too, the ivy has straggled pretty thickly, and has stopped such light as there ever was. It ill became a Sundon to stray down there, having got the keys from the sexton, when the moon was streaming through the window, scattering that green and yellow phosphoric light mysteriously on the pavement, making strange ghostly patterns, out of which rise the stiff, sleeping figures, looking as cold and white as though cut out of snow.

There is an old organ, — one of the fine old organs that came from Holland two centuries before, — ripe and mellow in every tone; and at this moment it is playing softly, rolling swelling music up to the chancel,

over the sleeping Sundon figures, — the praying knights, and the full-wigged barons; up to the porch where I stand, with my dismal heart in my hand, looking in timorously. So it plays on, as with pipes of silver, and the moon streams in through the diamond panes, bringing with it to the floor the pale saffron tints; bringing out very distinctly a figure that I seem to know pretty well, and which leans upon one of the white tombs. A figure in full green velvet coat, and flowing periwig, with bluish fingers nestling in among his lace frilling, and with smooth, placid cheeks. He leans against the tomb easily enough, and moonlight from the old window comes through the straggling ivy and diamond panes, right upon that star of his. All this while, the organ is playing away softly. He rises up at length, and walks round among the tombs, stopping before each in a musing sort of fashion.

Before the praying knights, and the knights on cushions, and the dames with frills; before the men in flowing robes and wigs, the bishops, dignitaries, chancellors, and soldiers, whom the great house had provided to the State; before the noble ladies of the house, the peerless beauties, who had intermarried with other great houses, whose commemorative tablets were there, fixed in the old grey walls — he stops, and reads the inscription, those full smooth cheeks of his relaxing complacently. It was gratifying, no doubt, to read off that roll of high deeds and higher titles, all so gorgeously emblazoned. His race had not been unworthy of the first Baron Sundon. And so he goes from one to the other, always with that placid smile, the old Dutch organ still playing in the gallery. At last, he stops, not two yards from me, and begins reading a fresh tablet, newly let into the

wall, with two busts over it. Thereupon his eyes sparkle, his smooth cheeks wrinkle up, and his teeth nearly chatter; so that, from pure curiosity, I steal out from under the porch, and come softly behind him. Then I read over his shoulder what was written on the new tablet.

It said (and, by some of that saffron light which came through the old diamond panes, it might be fairly read), that here lay the body of one Piers Sundon, Esquire, with all his style, titles, and virtues, and of Annie, his wife, who has no style, title, or virtues whatever; no descent nor dignity; no honours; no family; no pedigree. O, now, I see at last with a horrible agitation at heart, and terrible conviction of its truth, what has so moved the placid ancestor in the green-velvet coat! Now, do I begin to see what that trembling finger — at last withdrawn from the laceruffle — is pointing at. Well might the smooth ancestor turn round at that sharp cry of grief, still pointing his trembling finger at that fatal blot upon his line — and fix one living glance of rage and hatred on me!

With that despairing cry, all things seemed to melt away; grey church, saffron moonlight, white sleeping figures on tombs, old window and diamond panes, and the soft music from the old Dutch organ. All things departed, except the first Baron Sundon, in his green velvet coat and star.

VIII.

My Lord Willoughby, as has been said before, lived mostly in foreign parts, coming home now and then for short spans. They have fine blood in Italy — princes

by the hundred: so he usually kept to that villa of his on the Arno, where he was held in much esteem by the princes. My Lord Willoughby's whole gospel lay in that little word, Blood. "You and I," he would say to me, "are the only persons of condition in the county; the others are mere gutter-bloods, and that fellow Hackleton is their prime Don!" For he hated that fellow Hackleton from his soul. He was now over on one of his visits, but was to tarry some time, it was said: having brought home a daughter and many retainers.

My lord called over at Holm Hollies that next morning, and was rejoiced to see me looking so well, and then fell off into rambling talk about princes and marches and high things, and courts, and that villa of his on the Arno. All which came acceptable enough after that long drought of such matters over at the spick-and-span Factory. It was comforting to find myself in the atmosphere of a person of quality, and of such quality as my lord. Then rambling home to the county, "By the way," he said, "you have been with Hackleton — prince of gutter-bloods I call him — I wished to speak to you about that. Sit down, and don't be disturbed."

What was this beginning to portend?

"You know," continued my lord, "that I never could endure the Parvenu. I always said he was a gutter-blood, and would do a dirty thing. Well! What do you suppose this dignified workman, this baroneted cur, has been busy with, while entertaining you? Don't be disturbed; but I thought it right to let you know —"

"What?" I said, in much trouble.

"Why buying up your incumbrances — exchanging places with your creditors. I know he has a hankering

after your acres. A rare plot, and worthy of a gutter-blood!"

I was astounded. "Are you sure?" I said. "Can this be true?"

"Stay!" continued my lord, "he has a daughter, has he not? — a fair seducing thing — placed well in the centre of his spider's web. A better plot still. Don't you see it all now, my poor friend? Turn of the mortgage screw with one hand; with the other, seducing daughter. Take your choice. That's the game!"

That was the game! So it was, and blind I must have been, not to have seen it long since. Here was the secret of that interest in my affairs — that rummage among the tin boxes and papers, which I had so foolishly privileged. Here was the fruit of that laying heads together of the two brothers, and of that cunning embassy of the Hooknose, and of his quiet suggestion for admixture of plebeian blood. A low juggle, indeed, and most clumsy plot!

For my lord threw out the broadest hint, for the confounding of it.

"You and I," he said, again, "being the only true blood in the county, should stand to one another. If he shake his deed in your face, don't be afraid of him; there is one who will back you. This tender wench has not been angling for you: you have not been committing yourself! Gracious! Don't tell me that!"

I was turning crimson, and I thought I saw a look of repulsion in my lord's face.

IX.

THIS was what I said to the mushroom Baronet in the plainest terms (he and his long-headed brother were together in the study):

"Sir, you have behaved unworthily — unworthy of your station and the title you bear. But your scheme has failed. Do your worst. Ruin me if you please: but not all your power will bring me to degrade my name and blood, by such an alliance."

His pale cheek was suffused with colour, and his fingers trembled. Hooknose was smiling.

"Your ambassador," I went on quite in a fury, "did his work well this morning, striving skilfully to depreciate this poor faith of mine in noble blood, now the only estate left to me. But thank Heaven it has failed!" And here, in the excess of my excitement, I clasped my hands together. Hooknose smiled again.

The baronet's cheek grew paler. He was unprepared, he said huskily, for this, quite unprepared. But he understood it. It was not worth while setting himself right; for, though of humble birth, he had his dignity as a man to look to. He had been misjudged, but would leave all to time.

With that he rose and gathered together his papers. My heart smote me cruelly: it was scarcely patrician to have spoken so to him.

"Give Mr. Sundon," he said to his brother, "those papers." Then turning to me, he said again: "Sir, I leave all to time. You will see your injustice one day." With that he passed away from the room.

"I hand you the mortgage deeds," Hooknose said, "pursuant to instructions."

"I know the price wanted for them," I answered scornfully, and left the house.

X.

So had I thus cut away, all that bound me to the baronet — cut away, too, what had bound me to his golden-haired daughter. I had passed from them with aristocracy colours streaming! Proud blue blood was triumphant. It had vindicated itself grandly. The plebeian dragon was grovelling in the dust. Yet my breast had a heavy weight on it all the while, from early morning until sundown: heaviest, too, on waking at midnight with weary vision of golden-hair and of the pale plebeian's face and trembling fingers — with lurking suspicion, too, that my nobility had asserted itself in something too rough and unmanly a fashion.

When I was at home the week following, busily arranging matters, news was brought in that my Lord Willoughby was coming up the avenue. That purest of Corinthian blood was coming to pay me a visit. Nay, for that matter, aforesaid blood had come the day before, and the day before that again, being seemingly very anxious to have speech of me. Such eagerness was unaccountable to me. My lord desired to know more of me; as it was only fitting that two such noble stocks should be brought much together. His lordship was a person of awful consideration and extreme nicety in "mixing," as it was called.

My lord was rejoiced to see me, wringing me very cordially by the hand. He must see more of me in future. By the way, he had something to tell me. And my lord took out a letter.

"I got this," said my lord, "three days ago from a noble relation in the Upper House. He tells me that your Barony is almost secure; but a little trouble and a word or two from persons of interest —"

My breath came and went. "You mean? —" I asked, trembling.

"I mean," said my lord, jocularly, "that the thing only wants a little pushing. Come to-morrow and dine, and we can talk it over. By the way, you have not seen my daughter, Constance, since she came home?"

The Barony within grasp! Was it credible? What did it mean? How laughable the notion of such a title borne by insolvency: with the Union Workhouse for its family seat.

"Pooh, pooh!" said my lord, the next day, in the drawing-room as we waited for dinner, "what's an incumbrance here or there? We might push you through that. There are many with odd thousands to spare who would not grudge it to a young man starting in life."

Here entered the daughter, Constance: white-faced, but with an air of true aristocracy — with a stately bearing as of a queen. Blood always makes itself so felt. The poor saffron-haired damsel always came in, gently and timorously, as if uncertain what treatment she might encounter. Constance had a noble arch in her neck, as if she were born to command. How gracious she was to me all that night, as was also the noble lord her father, I will not dwell on now. There were fresh particulars concerning the Barony. Nay, my lord had need only to lift up his little finger and the thing was done.

Poleaxe was a botch. Leave it to my lord. But he would take leave to say one thing: Young men of noble

blood, starting in life, should think of settling down, and of having done with wild oats. To one conclusion, however, he began to point without disguise: to his own pure-blooded, white-faced daughter; and, as to that matter of pressing mortgage and money difficulty, why, who would not have a pleasure in helping on a young man who had come to such straits by no fault of his own?

XI.

I GREW into favour with the white-faced maid; and paid her court, all to that end which I thought my lord had hinted at. I grew into favour with her: but it was a cold suit: the very corpse of wooing. No blandishments of that piece of quality could warm it up. No, not in the least. I have written it down, that I had cast off violently all that bound me to the baronet and to his. All! I fear me all this while those golden threads are still drawing, drawing me gently back again. That pale saffron-hair is in a fearful tangle about my heart! More weary, weary nights and heavy thoughts! O this nobility!

XII.

BUT how about Foreclosure, Distress, and Levy, and their attendant harpies, all this while: and specially about the strange men I had been sent over to meet? My lord would nod and wink strangely as I mentioned this — would try and turn off the matter; but never wholly denying participation. But, what led the fellows over to the spick-and-span Factory? There was something always whispering to me that there was a certain

mysterious connection between the Factory family and that staving off of cruel Fi-fa, Levvari, and Company.

But again my lord winked and looked knowing — would tell nothing — no, not a word.

“Come over to-morrow evening,” wrote my lord, “I have something serious to speak of to you.” It needed not an Œdipus to guess what. So it was incumbent on me to set out at his bidding, even through that dark December evening, when there were signs of a storm coming on. Right cheerfully in olden days would I have ridden forth in another direction. But that was over now.

Never was my lord in such cheerful humour. He was all points and pleasant turns; positively gay as a lark. Those shining false rows of teeth of his were always on view, and he was full of the liveliest notions on human things generally. He was pleased to say he took great delight in my humour — which, to say the truth, was of the dimmest. His walnuts went cracking off under his aristocratic fingers to the music of his own happy quips and light talk. The noble white-faced lady, too, was fitted out gorgeously, and was filled with an overflowing graciousness and extra sweetness.

The walnuts went cracking on, and the light talk kept pace with them. Strange to say, all that night long my lord made no allusion to that matter of blood — a word seldom five minutes absent from his talk. I recollect that, distinctly, and it struck me at the time as being a curious thing.

The walnuts went cracking on. The talk fell round on my concerns. How pleasant a thing it would be, he said, if I could be set free and straight upon my legs. No incumbrance, no mortgage, no risk of Ca-sa, Fi-fa,

and Company. Which tune he sang for a good long spell: then, turning suddenly on me, he would know had I been thinking of the way I was in?

To which I replied (in an absent fashion, for I was thinking of other things), that I had been thinking of it deeply, but could see no mode of extrication beyond one. At this beginning of business talk, Constance rose and retired.

"Pah!" said my lord, with all the teeth on view at once. "I will help your thoughts for you. Between persons of our high rank, and especially between persons of our relative ages, there should be no beating about the bush. I have not had my eyes shut all this while. No, no!"

Crack went a walnut again, and his head went back upon his shoulder to survey me with his knowing look. Then my lord went on to say, over again, that he had not had his eyes shut all that while — that he had seen what had been going on — that we had managed it cleverly, very cleverly, very cleverly indeed — in short, I should be set free and clear to start with: there should not be so much as a pound outlying against me. To all of which I could only answer that I was very grateful to him for all his goodness — the usual song in short.

But my lord had not done yet. There was something to add which seemed very hard to make its way out. "You see," said he, still smiling so pleasantly, "what a fine position this will be for you. Young men are not so started every day. Constance, too, so amiable and good! Likes you, on my soul I believe to distraction! Bear in mind, too," my lord added hastily, "that you

may have the barony within a month from this date. My honour as a nobleman you may!"

My lord's lips were all this while opening and shutting nervously.

"By the way," he went on hastily, "I should tell you — for between us persons of rank and so intimate there should be no concealments — and a young man in your position should not be too thin skinned —"

Here he stopped to pick out a walnut.

"Not too thin skinned, I say."

What was he driving at?

"You see, my dear Sundon, we are all frail creatures, even the best of us, at one time of our lives. Young men will be young men to the end of the world. Yes, we will have that barony for you. My wife, poor soul (you never knew her) died long since — long before Constance up-stairs was born."

"What," said I rising up, "do you tell me that —"

"Precisely," said my lord, showing his white teeth, "you understand me I see. But the barony recollect!"

I could not believe what I heard, but he spoke even more plainly. I lost all self-command. To think me capable of being bought with such a lure. It maddened me. I struck him across his white-toothed mouth with my hand. Then rushed from the house. The night was dark and stormy, and I scarcely knew the road. But I could not rest until I was free of that hateful place. The wind howled, and there were great drops of rain falling at intervals. I scarcely heeded them. The bitter feeling that my faith in the pure honour of aristocracy was too cruelly shaken to feel aught else.

All this, as I struggled through the storm along the high road to Holm Hollies.

If I had been so deluded in the one respect, what safeguard had there been against my going astray in another? There was the pale face of the baronet now visiting me reproachfully. All was perplexity — all darkness. All had come of the promptings of that specious well-born villain, and who should tell how much of truth or falsehood lay mixed together! And she of the golden hair! — despised, abandoned — cast from me like a weed of her own sweet garden. O fool! fool! noble blooded, aristocratic, deluded fool!

But it was not too late. There were sounds as of wheels approaching — the carriage that was to have taken me home, going for me to Lord Willoughby's. Nothing could be so opportune.

XIII.

It was not more than ten o'clock when I drove up to the Villa Reale. The unexpected visitant made his way in and told his tale to the quiet baronet and to the golden-haired. It all came out as I had thought. Noble blood and aristocracy had descended even to imposture and to telling of low lies. It was the baronet, indeed, who had received the strange men and sent them away satisfied. "I told you," he said, in his gentle way, "I would leave it all to time."

Later on, when I had asked and found forgiveness for that cruel misjudging of mine, both from him and from the golden-haired; — when I was striving to win my way back to that old footing I well nigh hopelessly lost — he said to me in his old, quiet, melancholy way,

"I have never had thoughts of lifting my poor child into a station above her own. Since coming to riches, this is what I have laid out for her and for me. I do not believe in that bettering of one's condition by a lofty marriage. We shall all do best in that walk wherein we have been placed. And so, at that season when you were so harshly judging of us, it was my firm resolve never to sanction such an alliance as you were then seeking. In this humble creed I have brought her up; and she holds to it as firmly as I do now. In this humble creed I hope to live and die. We have our little plebeian honour to hold by, as well as the nobler classes. Therefore, sir, we will never come back again to this subject."

These were the words of the Baronet; every one of which dealt a sharp pang. O! the golden-haired was gone from me for ever!

And so it is left to me to drag on a life of bitter sorrow and vain yearnings. Yearnings after what my own wild folly has taken from me. If nothing else, it has been a school of bitter teaching.

Whether, in course of time, which works great marvels, the golden-haired will ever be given to me again, is yet in a deep cloud. So I drag on my weary life with some light figment of hope before me. I look to the future. My faith in the past is broken utterly.

HISTORY OF A MIRACLE.

ABOUT the middle of the month of September, eighteen hundred and forty-six, the diligence running from Valence to Grenoble, took up at Saint Marcellin, among the mountains of Dauphiny, a lady of mature age, whose only luggage consisted of a bandbox. All the places inside being already filled, the lady was obliged to share with the conductor the modest cabriolet which surmounted the vehicle. Soon entering into conversation, she informed the conductor that a glorious event had just happened in her family; one of her nearest relatives had covered himself with glory in Africa, had been mentioned in the order of the day to the army, and had won a higher grade. The lady added, however, that she thought military renown was as fleeting as the smoke of gunpowder; and aspiring herself to a more durable lustre, she was combining an act which would become immortal, and was then on her way to the Alps, feeling sure of founding there the immortality at which she aimed. The conductor, while admiring her courage and resolution, could not understand what she meant, and when on arriving at Grenoble he handed the lady her bandbox, and she repeated that she was going to the mountains, where a great event would soon take place, he wished her a good journey and good luck, and thought no more of the incident.

A few days afterwards, two shepherds, named Maximin Giraud, aged eleven years and a half, and Melanie Mathieu, aged fourteen years, on descending from the mountain of La Salette, where they had been tending their cattle, informed their master that, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, a beautiful lady had appeared to them, telling them some great news, and confiding to each of them a great secret. When questioned, they gave a detailed account of the apparition, of which the following is the substance:

In the afternoon, after taking the cows to drink, the children had gone to sleep beside the stream, near a little dried-up fountain. On awaking they went in search of the cows, and on their return saw what they called a great light, near the fountain. When the shepherds approached this light, it seemed to open, and in its midst they perceived a lady sitting upon a stone, weeping, with her elbows resting upon her knees, and her face in her hands. At seeing her the little girl became frightened, and let fall her stick; but the boy courageously told her to keep her stick, as he did his, because if he (the light) did them any harm, he would give him a good thump. But the lady dispelled all fear by getting up, and begging the children to advance towards her and listen to what she had to tell them. The lady then said:

"If my people will not humble themselves, I shall be obliged to let my son's arm fall down upon them; it is so heavy and so weighty, that I can hold it up no longer. How long I have suffered for you all because I do not wish my son to abandon you, and all the while you do not care.

"I have given six days for labour, and reserved to

myself the seventh; but you will not give it to me! That weighs down my son's arm.

"And also the carters cannot swear without using my son's name. These are the things which weigh down my son's arm."

"If the harvest rots, it is all the same to you. I warned you last year by the potato harvest, but you did not care; on the contrary, when you found rotten ones, you swore and used my son's name: therefore they will continue to rot, and by Christmas there will be none left."

Here Melanie did not understand what had been said, and inquired of her companion, upon which the lady answered:

"Ah! my children, you do not understand French; wait then, I will tell it to you differently."

She then repeated in patois the sentence about the harvest, and continued:

"He who has corn must not sow it because the animals will eat it; if a few plants were to grow, in thrashing them they would fall into dust."

"A great famine is coming; before it comes, the little children under seven years of age will be seized with trembling, and will die in the arms of the persons holding them; and the grown-up people will make penance by hunger. The grapes will rot, and the walnuts will become bad."

At this point the lady gave each of the children a secret, speaking in French, but adding, "You must not tell this, nor this, nor this * * *" As she spoke to each in turn, the other could not hear what she said, only seeing the movement of her lips. The lady then added:

"But if they become converted, the stones and the rocks will transform themselves into corn, and the potatoes will be found planted in the earth."

The mysterious stranger then explained to the children, at some length, the nature of bad corn; after which she concluded by saying twice in French: "Well! my children, you will make this known to my people."

"She then ascended the mountain," says Maximin, in his account of the affair, "about fifteen paces, sliding along the grass as if she was suspended or being pushed, her feet hardly touching the earth. We followed her to an elevation, Melanie passing before her and myself walking by her side. Before disappearing, this beautiful lady raised herself up as high as a metre and a half from the ground, remaining thus suspended in the air for a moment; we then successively lost sight of her head, her arms, and the rest of her body. She seemed to melt away like butter in soup. A great light remained, which I tried to catch in my hand, as well as the flowers which she wore upon her feet, but they all vanished together."

"Melanie said to me, 'She must be a great saint,' and I replied, 'If we had known she was a great saint, we would have asked her to take us with her.'"

The costume worn by the lady, as described by the shepherds, was as strange as her language. It consisted of a white dress trimmed with a garland of silver flowers; a yellow silk apron edged with silver fringe; yellow stockings; white satin shoes ornamented with a tiny garland of flowers; a scarf also trimmed with roses; a rosary made of red coral beads; a gracefully put-on veil, attached by a wreath of roses; a chain bearing a crucifix; and hanging to her waist a hammer and pair of pincers,

which are believed by French Catholics to be instruments used in the torture of Jesus Christ.

Great excitement prevailed in the little village of La Salette on Sunday the twentieth of September, when Monsieur the Curé had announced from the pulpit the event of the preceding day. Soon the news, flying from department to department, spread all over France and the Catholic world; and pilgrims rushed in crowds to the holy mountain, to drink the water of the formerly dried-up, but now miraculously abundant fountain, standing near the scene of the apparition.

On the nineteenth of July, eighteen hundred and forty-seven, the Bishop of Grenoble instructed Monsieur Rousselot, his vicaire-général, and Orcel, the superior of the grand seminary, to proceed to an investigation of the event of La Salette. After spending two months in visiting the mountain, questioning the children, and examining the persons who had first heard their story, as well as those who pretended to have been miraculously cured by using the water of the fountain, these two gentlemen made a report, in which they came to the conclusion that the apparition was supernatural, and that it was the Holy Virgin who appeared and spoke to Maximin and Melanie. This report having been submitted to a commission composed of sixty canons, curés, and vicaires of Grenoble, and presided over by the bishop himself, was adopted after eight sittings.

About the month of July, eighteen hundred and fifty-one, the Pope, having been informed that the little shepherds wished to divulge to him the secrets they had received from the Holy Virgin, his holiness requested Monseigneur de Bonald, the Cardinal Archbishop of Grenoble, to go and question the children, and receive

from them, in his name, their so-called secrets. Arriving on the twelfth of the month, according to appointment, the archbishop was received by all the clergy of the diocese, except the curé of the cathedral, who, worn out, he was informed, with the fatigues of his ministry, had gone to the country to take a few days' rest. His lordship was also told that the children, declining to confide to him their secrets, intended to send them direct to the Pope. Meanwhile, Monsieur Rousselot and Monsieur Gérin, the curé of the cathedral, had started six days before for Rome, carrying with them the secrets, which had been put into writing by the children, and carefully packed and sealed in presence of witnesses. The archbishop, doubtless, feeling hurt by this proceeding, on his return to his own diocese protested against the growing belief in the apparition.

Nevertheless, upon the nineteenth of September following, the fifth anniversary of the apparition, the Bishop of Grenoble issued a doctrinal charge to his clergy, in which he stated his opinions as follows:

We deem that the apparition of the Holy Virgin to two shepherds, on the nineteenth of September, 1846, upon one of the mountains of the Alpine chain, situated in the parish of La Salette, bears in itself all the appearance of truth, and that the faithful are authorised in believing it to be indubitably certain. We believe that this fact acquires a new degree of certainty from the immense spontaneous concourse of faithful to the site of the apparition, as well as from the wonderful results of the said event, a great number of which cannot be questioned without violating the rules of human testimony. On this account, to testify to God and the glorious Virgin Mary our lively gratitude, we authorise the worship of Our Lady of Salette. We expressly forbid the priests and the faithful of our diocese from ever speaking or writing publicly against the fact which we proclaim to-day, and which henceforth commands respect from all.

The worship of La Salette, after the appearance of this document, assumed gigantic proportions. Pioneers

were employed to cut a road in the steep and precipitous mountain, which had already been marked out with crosses by devout pilgrims. The bare tableland of the mountain entirely changed its aspect, becoming covered with houses in which missionaries of the Salette took up their abode. The sheep and cattle disappeared from their green pastures, while sisters of charity arrived in flocks to provide for the wants of the pilgrims. The miraculous water, sold at four shillings a bottle, was dispatched to all parts of the world; medals commemorative of the apparition, also said to possess healing virtues, were struck and widely distributed; and finally on the twenty-fifth of May, eighteen hundred and fifty-two, the bishops of Valence and Grenoble laid the foundation-stone of the church, which is now seen rising majestically upon the site of the apparition.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons, seeing the mania spreading thus rapidly, tried to check its course by issuing, on the sixth of August, a charge to his clergy, forbidding them from encouraging the worship of La Salette until it had received the sanction of the Pope. He also warned them not to be taken in by miracles, prophecies, pictures, or prayers, which were only a source of guilty gain to covetous people. About the same time the Bishop of Gap denounced the affair as a guilty intrigue and an unworthy speculation, and also severely interdicted the worship of La Salette in his diocese until its approval by our holy father the Pope.

These obstacles were, however, soon removed by a rescript from his holiness, dated the twenty-fourth of August, granting certain privileges to the grand altar of the Sanctuary of La Salette, and by a bull conferring

special indulgences upon all the members of the brotherhood of La Salette.

Toward the end of the year eighteen hundred and fifty-two, however, the worship of our Lady of Salette received a severe blow from an unexpected quarter. A priest of the diocese of Grenoble, named Deleon, curé of Villeurbanne, published, under the name of Donnadieu, in a pamphlet entitled *La Salette Fallavaux* (*fallax vallis*), or the Valley of Falsehood, a violent attack upon the devotion of La Salette. Throwing doubts upon the testimony and veracity of the children, and by analysing the language which they put into the mouth of the Virgin Mary, as well as the costume they described, Monsieur Deleon argued that the miracle of La Salette had been invented for the purpose of imposing upon the credulity of the faithful, and robbing them of their money. He denounced the affair as a Californian speculation got up by the clergy and Bishop of Grenoble for their own profit, and helped by Monsieur Rousselot to pay his debts.

Immediately after the appearance of this publication, the Bishop of Grenoble wrote to the *Univers* and all the other religious newspapers, condemning that infamous pamphlet, full of false statements, calumnious suppositions, and gross abuse, containing as many lies as words. In January, eighteen hundred and fifty-three, Monsieur Rousselot published an answer to the attack of Monsieur l'Abbé Deleon, in a book called a *New Sanctuary to Mary*; adding many cases of marvellous cures to those already known.

But, in the month of April following, Monsieur Deleon re-entered the lists, armed with new and more formidable weapons. Taking as his starting point the explanation

of the apparition by divine intervention, as given by the Bishop of Grenoble, he sought to prove in a second volume of the Valley of Falsehood that the affair was a purely human invention. Bringing into notice the lady traveller who journeyed from Marcellin to Grenoble with a bandbox in eighteen hundred and forty-six, Monsieur Deleon alleged upon the authority of the conductor of the diligence, that it was a Mademoiselle Constance Saint Ferreol de Lamerlière, who, carrying her costume with her in a bandbox, and arriving unseen upon the mountain of La Salette, had played the part of the Holy Virgin to the stupid and ignorant shepherds.

Monsieur Deleon says:

“When the miracle of La Salette had taken some hold of the popular belief, the conductor of the diligence suddenly recollected the strange language held by the lady traveller who was going to the mountains, and aiming at immortality. And he soon came to the conclusion that this lady was the heroine of La Salette. He said nothing, however, for some time, until one day happening to go upon business to the house of a respectable and intelligent inhabitant of the village of Tullins, named Mazet, the conductor found him and his wife examining some of the medals struck in honour of the apparition. Monsieur Mazet showed the medals to Fortin, the conductor, who, after taking them in his hand and turning them over, smiled and shrugged his shoulders, saying: ‘La Salette is a trick of Mademoiselle Lamerlière’s.’ Monsieur and Madame Mazet knowing Mademoiselle Lamerlière, and not being able to believe what Fortin had alleged, replied: ‘You would certainly not dare to say such a thing if Mademoiselle Lamerlière were here.’ ‘You are mistaken,’ he answered, ‘for if she were here

I would repeat to her what I have said to you, and she would not deny it.”

Chance would have it, that Mademoiselle Lamerlière came to pay a visit to Monsieur and Madame Mazet while the conductor was still talking to them about the miracle.

“You see,” he whispered, “that I am not afraid — I do not go away, and I will tell her what I said.”

Madame Mazet, without allowing him time to speak, repeated to Mademoiselle Lamerlière exactly what Fortin had said respecting her: and Mademoiselle Lamerlière merely replied:

“What the conductor says must not be believed, because it would injure religion.”

Three or four days after this conversation, Fortin meeting Mademoiselle Lamerlière in the street, accosted her, saying: “We are alone to-day: all reserve upon your side is useless — tell me what induced you to go to La Salette, and play the part of the Holy Virgin?” Mademoiselle Lamerlière caught unawares, and pressed by an interrogator whom she could not deceive, answered: “You, Fortin, may be allowed not to believe in it, but pray let others believe in it, because it is so good for religion.”

Mademoiselle Lamerlière is descended from a good family, and her brother-in-law, the Marquis de Suzy, greatly distinguished himself in Africa. From her youth until about the year eighteen hundred and forty-six, Mademoiselle Lamerlière was a nun. Soon after she ceased to belong to any religious institution, her sister and brother-in-law tried to have her deprived of the management of her affairs upon the pretext of insanity. Ever since that time she has lived a wandering life,

travelling from place to place, but always carrying with her a bandbox. Immediately after the announcement of the miracle of La Salette, Mademoiselle Lamerlière became one of its most ardent and zealous supporters; all her energy, all her intelligence, her whole efforts were concentrated upon the propagation of the new belief.

When the revolution of February, eighteen hundred and forty-eight, had inflamed all the youthful imaginations of the towns, it was for a moment feared that morality and religion might suffer in consequence. Mademoiselle Lamerlière, therefore, took up her abode in a modest apartment in Grenoble, which soon became the daily rendezvous of the most democratic of the workmen, soldiers, and students. Then standing before an image of the Madonna, and child, she preached. And, pretending to be more liberal than any of her auditors, she surprised them all, by the boldness of her ideas, and the temerity of her language. Indeed, Mademoiselle Lamerlière carried her revolutionary excitement so far as to attend and speak at the democratic clubs, where she always provoked the laughter and applause of her audience. Moreover, when disputing in the clubs against an eccentric abbé, named Didon, her popularity rose to such a pitch, that the multitude carried her in triumph through the streets; and, finally, Mademoiselle Lamerlière became a candidate for a seat in the National Assembly.

Not having been elected, however, she left Grenoble about the end of April, eighteen hundred and forty-eight; and in a few days it was announced that a beautiful white lady had appeared at a lonely spot near the village of Sodières to a little boy and girl, telling them that she was the Lady of Salette, and that people did very wrong in not believing what she said.

Two months after this, the Lady of Salette again appeared to two young girls near Sodières, still dressed in the same costume, holding the same language, and giving the same warnings to her people. These apparitions having been repeated several times, created a considerable sensation in the surrounding country, inducing some thousands of people, including many priests, to hasten to the spot, and stay all night, watching for a reappearance of the apparition; but the Lady of Salette did not venture to show herself.

Meanwhile, Mademoiselle Lamerlière, in the course of her wanderings, often stopped at an hotel outside the town of Grenoble, kept by an honest couple named Carrat. Mademoiselle Lamerlière was generally accompanied by a governess, whom she had fascinated, and who had given up a good situation to follow her. She had, moreover, four dogs; and all this family lived together in one room on tenpence a day. Mademoiselle Lamerlière, finding her bed too soft, asked and obtained permission to sleep upon the bare ground in the stable, where a stone served her as a pillow; and she lay, with her precious bandbox and crucifix by her side. She remained in her room all day, going out only at twilight, and returning late in the evening to her bed in the stable.

This strange existence having inspired distrust in the mind of the hostess, she went up one day to her lodger's room and remonstrated with her, kindly and gently, upon her way of living.

"You do not know," answered Mademoiselle Lamerlière, "who I am. I will inform you."

She then opened her bandbox, and took out of it a purple dress, tastefully trimmed with different ornaments,

and put it on. Without allowing her visitor time to admire it, she took out a pink dress and put it on with a somewhat mystic air. Madame Carrat then thought that her lodger was an actress, and told her so mildly.

"You are very simple, my dear hostess," replied Mademoiselle Lamerlière, "wait a moment." And immediately taking off her pink costume, she replaced it by a white dress, a yellow apron, yellow stockings, white satin shoes, a scarf, a veil; a wreath of roses, a gold chain and cross, a coral chaplet, a hammer, and a pair of pincers, the exact costume, in short, of the Lady of Salette. Madame Carrat was still more surprised by the studied attitude of her lodger, who in an inspired tone, told her of the evils which overran France, caused by the impiety of the people, and of the mission she had received from God to prevent their continuance. Grieved indeed, was Madame Carrat, at what she saw and heard, for she thought herself a good Christian, and had in her kitchen a picture of the apparition representing the Lady of Salette in the very same costume she beheld before her. Moreover, she had read what had been written about the event, and recognised in the mouth of Mademoiselle Lamerlière, the language attributed to the Virgin.

"You have done a bad action," she said to her; "it was you who went to La Salette."

"The action is very praiseworthy," answered Mademoiselle Lamerlière, "because it serves the interests of religion; besides, am I not as beautiful as a Virgin?"

"Beautiful, I grant you! But why did you play the part of the holy Virgin?"

"The welfare of religion required it. You have seen my means of success, and can you expect me to do otherwise than succeed? Let me continue my mission in

your house, — the locality is favourable. I will soon draw crowds, and you will be happy through me.”

This proposal not having been accepted, Mademoiselle Lamerlière left the hotel, and after wandering about for a few more months, finally took up her residence at Cras, a little village near Tullins, in a hut containing but one room. Upon the outside of the hut, the following sign is painted, in large letters, — “To the little Bethlehem.” Inside the hut there are two beds, and the walls are covered with inscriptions and devices. Underground there is a cellar which has been transformed into a stable, representing the birth-place at Bethlehem, with the child and mother in the manger, and the ass and bullock all complete. Mademoiselle Lamerlière’s hut is, indeed, a sort of temple, in which she assembles her neighbours and the peasants from the surrounding villages, to preach to them about La Salette. But she is not satisfied with people coming to her; upon Sundays, market-days, and fair days, she goes to the different villages, in the public places and the public inns, where she gossips, drinks, and preaches La Salette. She mounts upon a table in order to be better seen, and her faithful companion, Mariette Bertin, sings Hymns in honour of La Salette; often until a late hour at night; and this has lasted for many years. Every Sunday she is to be seen, either at Polienas, at Morette, or at Tullins, always ready to drink in the public-houses, provided people will listen to her sermons and hymns upon La Salette.

And this is not all: nearly all the acquaintance of Mademoiselle Lamerlière have seen her bandbox and her costume, which she venerates almost as much as her manger; and none of them doubt that she is the heroine of La Salette. Moreover, she has been often questioned

upon the subject, and if she has never thought it prudent to confess, at any rate she has never denied it, merely replying when hard pressed, "Believe in La Salette, because it is good for religion."

Such is the accusation brought by Monsieur l'Abbé Deleon, against Mademoiselle Lamerlière, in the second volume of *The Valley of Falsehood*. No notice, however, was taken of the work, either by that lady or by the clergy of Dauphiny.

In the month of September, eighteen hundred and fifty-four, two new works upon La Salette made their appearance in one volume. The first was entitled *La Salette before the Pope, or Rationalism and Heresy flowing from the event of La Salette*, by Monsieur l'Abbé Deleon. In this book Monsieur Deleon examined the miracle from an ecclesiastical point of view, showing that it had not been sufficiently proved, to be received according to the rigid doctrines of the Church: and he continued to point out Mademoiselle Lamerlière as the heroine of the apparition.

The second work was entitled, *A Memoire addressed to the Pope by several members of the diocesan clergy*. A Monsieur l'Abbé Cartellier, one of the curés of Grenoble, wrote the Memoire, and then fifty-four priests of the diocese signed their names and gave their adhesion to it; upon the condition, however, that none of their names should be published. Moreover, the Memoire was taken to the Archbishop of Lyons, the known enemy of the miracle, and obtained his private sanction prior to its publication.

A few days after the appearance of this book, Monsieur Deleon was summoned before a secret ecclesiastical tribunal, presided over by the Bishop of Grenoble; and,

after a trial which lasted two days, was found guilty of insubordination towards his superiors, and was therefore interdicted from all priestly functions. The venerable Abbé Cartellier was also informed that he would meet the same fate if he did not separate himself from Monsieur Deleon, and make a complete retractation of everything contained in his Memoire.

Upon the thirtieth of September the Bishop of Grenoble issued a charge to his clergy, condemning the two works, and threatening with severe punishment any person in holy orders, who either read, kept, lent, or circulated in any way whatever any of Monsieur Deleon's books against La Salette, and with excommunication any member of the laity guilty of the same offence.

Twenty-two months afterwards, Mademoiselle Lamerlière brought an action against the Abbés Deleon and Cartellier, and Monsieur Rendon, their publisher, for eight hundred pounds damages, for defamation. Of course, while the trial was preparing, the Parisian press busied itself with discussing the different aspects of the case: and among the writers against La Salette none wrote in so gay, so witty, or so amusing a strain as Monsieur Pellitan in the *Siècle*. That gentleman, following the authority of Monsieur Deleon, presented Mademoiselle Lamerlière before the world as the heroine of La Salette, acting upon the inspiration of the clergy of her diocese. This allegation aroused her anger to such a pitch that she wrote to the Bishop of Grenoble, threatening to sue in the ecclesiastical courts for permission to bring an action against him personally, if he did not promise that she should receive complete satisfaction for the insults heaped upon her from all sides. Mademoiselle Lamerlière also wrote a letter to Monsieur

Pellitan containing a half confession, which was turned into a powerful weapon against her upon a subsequent trial.

After a long speech from Monsieur Morel, on behalf of Mademoiselle Lamerlière, the defence of Monsieur Deleon, presented by himself, and a few explanations on behalf of the Abbé Cartellier and Monsieur Rendon, the court gave a verdict for the defendants, but condemned them to pay all expenses.

Mademoiselle Lamerlière appealed against this decision, except as regarded Monsieur Rendon, and all parties had to prepare for a new trial.

In April, eighteen hundred and fifty-six, Monsieur Deleon published another work against La Salette, entitled, *The Conscience of a Priest and the Power of a Bishop*: and in it he brought to light some new details respecting the miracle and Mademoiselle Lamerlière.

The reception of the children's secret by the Pope is thus described by Monsieur Deleon. In the month of July, eighteen hundred and fifty-two, many cardinals and Roman prelates were passing the evening at the Vatican. The Pope deigned to entertain them with an account of the mysterious embassy of the morning, calling the first secret a silly stupidity, and the second a monstrosity, and saying that those absurd documents had been brought to him on that day by two fanatical priests, and had been immediately thrown among the waste paper.

Mademoiselle Lamerlière's appeal against the decision of the first court came on for hearing upon the twenty-seventh of April, eighteen hundred and fifty-seven. Orders were given to prevent women from attending the court, but Mademoiselle Lamerlière insisted upon being admitted with her companion, Mariette Bertin, good-

humouredly observing: "As I have to pay for the dinner, I have a good right to sit down to table." And she accordingly took her seat beside her advocate. She is described as a little woman, neatly dressed, about sixty years of age, and rather stout, with bright eyes and a lively disposition. Monsieur Deleon, who is tall, with a severe and expressive countenance, announcing great energy of character, sat by the side of Monsieur Bethmont, and Monsieur Cartellier did not appear.

The court was so crowded with barristers and priests, that the judge found it necessary to send for a body of troops to keep order in the room. Upon the opening of the sitting the Attorney-General demanded that the French newspapers should be forbidden from publishing any accounts of the proceedings. This request was granted by the court, with a view, it was said, of preventing public disturbances.

The principal points which Monsieur Jules Favre, for the fair plaintiff, tried to prove, were, — that the apparition of La Salette was not a human one, because nobody except shepherds could climb such steep mountains. Monsieur Bethmont answered, that the lady, with her strong constitution, was well able to climb the mountain. With regard to the accounts given by the children, that the lady was in an aureola of light, and disappeared gradually, head first, and feet last, Monsieur Bethmont declared them to be merely optical delusions. In the first place, the lady had on a yellow silk apron, and yellow silk stockings, and all her costume was spangled over with gold and silver: the sun shining upon her would therefore strike upon everything bright, and produce the effect of rays of light. In the second place, upon the tops of mountains, especially in the autumn

time, there are often thick mists, and as the lady is described as disappearing on going up the side of the mountain, she probably became more and more covered in mist, until she vanished entirely from the gaze of the bewildered shepherds.

Monsieur Jules Favre having replied without adducing any new facts, Monsieur Farconet made a short speech in favour of the Abbé Cartellier. In it he said, it was not in fact Mademoiselle Lamerlière, but the miracle, which was in cause, and that if the court decided in favour of Mademoiselle Lamerlière, it would be remaking the fortune of La Salette.

At length, after a few explanations made by Monsieur Deleon, and the summing up of the Attorney-General, the court confirmed the decision of the first tribunal, and condemned Mademoiselle Lamerlière to pay all expenses, and the fine which is always imposed upon unsuccessful appellants.

THE END OF FORDYCE, BROTHERS.

As long as I can remember, I have always loved the City — taking a strange delight in wandering up and down its busy streets, elbowing its merchants in their favourite gathering-places, and listening to the marvellous histories of many of its greatest money-makers. I like these men, perhaps, because I am not of them. I am of that listless, aimless, dreamy nature, which could not make money if it tried. The most promising enterprise would wither under my touch. Few are the guineas in my pocket that I can call my own, but I am well content, and no feeling of envy arises in my mind as I listen to the musical clinking of coin that comes from the open doors of the rich banking-houses.

My most frequent haunt is an old nook in the heart of the City, which, although now thrown open as a public thoroughfare, must have been, in former times, the private garden of some wealthy merchant's mansion. The entrance is under a low archway, built with bricks of the deepest purple red, and over the archway, in a white niche, stands a short, weather-beaten figure of a man, cut in stone, in a costume of a former age. Passing over the well-worn pavement through the arch, you find yourself in a small quadrangle containing that rarest of all things in these modern days — a city garden. Small care does it now receive, because no one can claim

it as his own. The ground is black and hard — the yellow gravel having long since been trodden out — and the chief vegetation which it boasts are two large chesnut trees, that seem to gain in breadth and vigour as the years roll on. A few drooping flowers in one corner, show that some town-bred hand is near, fond of the children of the country, though little versed in their nature and their ways. Under the shade of one of the trees stands an old wooden seat, chipped in many places, and rudely carved with names and dates. Sitting on this bench, and looking before you to the other side of the quadrangle, the eye rests upon a short passage running under wooden arches, like an aisle in the old Flemish Exchange of Sir Thomas Gresham. On the face of the brickwork dwelling surmounting these arches (now turned into offices) is fixed a rain-washed sun-dial, and over this is a small weathercock turret that at one time contained a bell.

I Any time between twelve o'clock and four, I may be found seated upon that old bench under the tree. Sometimes I bring a book, and read; sometimes I sit in listless repose, repeopling the place with quaintly-dressed shadows of the old stout-hearted merchants of the past. I seldom have more than one companion. Under the archway, and along the passage, busy men pass to and from their work the whole day long, but they are too much occupied, or too anxious, to give a moment's glance at the garden, or to linger by the way. My only fellow-visitor is an old clerk, whose years must have numbered nearly ninety, but whose memory is clear and strong, although his body is bent with age. He is a kind of pensioner connected with the place, and is the owner of the few faded flowers in the corner of the ground, which

he tends with his own hands. For eighty long, weary years he has lived in these old buildings, never having been out of the City further than Newington fields. Here he was born, and here, when the appointed time shall come, within sound of the familiar bells, and the familiar footsteps of the money-makers tramping over his head, he will drop into a City grave.

From the day when I ventured to give him some advice about the management of a lilac bush, apparently in a dying state, he came and sat by my side, pouring into my willing ear all the stories that he knew about the old houses that surrounded us. He soon found in me a sympathetic listener, who never interrupted or wearied of his narratives — the stores of a memory which extends over more than three-fourths of a century of time.

At one corner of the quadrangle is a part of the building with several long, dark, narrow, dusty windows, closely shut up with heavy oaken shutters, scarcely visible through the dirt upon the glass. None of the panes are broken, like those of a house in chancery, but its general gloomy, ruined appearance would assuredly have given it up as a prey to destruction, if it had not been in its present secluded position. Its dismal aspect excited my interest, and I obtained from my companion his version of its story.

I give it in his own person, though not exactly in his own words.

About the middle of the last century, two brothers were in business in these houses as general merchants, whose names were James and Robert Fordyce. They were quiet, middle-aged, amiable gentlemen, tolerably rich, honourable in their dealings, affable and benevolent

to their servants, as I found during the few years that I was in their employment. Their transactions were large, and their correspondents very numerous; but, although they must have been constantly receiving information, by letter and otherwise, that would have been valuable to them in speculations on the stock-market, they never, to the best of my knowledge, made use of it for that purpose, but confined their attention strictly to their trade. This building was not divided then as you see it now. In that corner which is closed up were our counting-houses, the private room of the two brothers being on the ground-floor. The rest of the square was used as warehouses, except the side over the arches, and that was set apart as the private residence of the partners, who lived there together, one being a bachelor, and the other a widower without children. I was quite a young man at this time, but I remember everything as distinctly as if it was only yesterday that I am speaking about, instead of seventy years ago. I have, perhaps, a strong reason for my sharpened memory — I consider myself the innocent cause of the destruction of the firm of Fordyce, Brothers, through an accident resulting from my carelessness. One afternoon I went to the Post-office with a letter directed to a firm in Antwerp with whom we had large dealings. I dropped it on the way. It contained a bank draft for a large amount, and, although every search was made for it that afternoon and evening, it was without success. The next morning, about eleven o'clock, it was brought to our counting-house by a rather short young man of singular though pleasing aspect, named Michael Armstrong. He had a long interview with the elder partner, Mr. James Fordyce, in the private room, and what transpired we never exactly knew;

but the result was, that from that hour Michael Armstrong took his seat in our office as the junior clerk.

I had many opportunities of observing our new companion, and I used them to the best of my ability. His appearance was much in his favour, and he had a considerable power of making himself agreeable when he thought proper to use it. It was impossible to judge of his age. He might have been fifteen, — he might have been thirty. His face, at times, looked old and careworn, at others, smiling and young, but there was sometimes a vacant calculating, insincere expression in his eye, that was not pleasant. He made no friends in the place, — none sought him, none did he seek, — and I do not think he was liked enough by any of the clerks to be made the subject of those little pleasantries that are usually indulged in at every office. They had probably detected his ability and ambition, and they already feared him.

I thought at one time I was prejudiced against him, because I had been the chance instrument of bringing him to the place, and because his presence constantly reminded me of a gross act of carelessness, that had brought down upon me the only rebuke I ever received from my employers. But I found out too well afterwards, that my estimate of his character was correct — more correct than that of my fellow-clerks, many of whom were superior to me in education and position, though not in discernment.

My constant occupation — when I was not actively employed in the duties of the office — was watching Michael Armstrong; and I soon convinced myself, that everything he did was the result of deep, quick, keen, and selfish calculation. I felt that the bringing back of

the letter was not the result of any impulse of honesty, but of a conviction that it was safer and more profitable to do so, coupled with a determination to make the most of his seeming virtue. What the elder Mr. Fordyce gave him, I never knew; but I judge from his liberal character that it was something considerable; and I know that when Michael Armstrong took his place in our counting-house, he was only doing that which he had willed to do from the first moment that he had opened the lost letter, and ascertained the firm from whom it was sent. There was, at times, something fearfully, awfully fascinating in watching the silent, steady working of a will like his, and to see it breaking down in its progress every barrier opposed against it, whether erected by God or man; others saw it, and watched it, like me, and were equally dazzled and paralysed.

Michael Armstrong affected to be somewhat deaf — I say affected, for I have good reason to believe that the infirmity was put on to aid him in developing his many schemes. During the greater part of the day, he acted as private secretary of the two brothers, sitting in one corner of their large room, by that window on the ground-floor to the left, which is now closed up, like all the others in that portion of the building.

— I have said before that the firm were often in the receipt of early and valuable intelligence, which they used for the legitimate purposes of their trade, but never for speculations in the stock-market. A good deal of our business lay in corn and sugar, and the information that the brothers got, enabled them to make large purchases and sales with greater advantage. Sometimes special messengers came with letters, sometimes pigeon expresses, as was the custom in those days. Whatever

words dropped from the partners' table — (and they dropped with less reserve, as there was only a half-deaf secretary in the room) — were drunk in by that sharp, calm, smiling, deceitful face at the window. But, perhaps, his greatest opportunity was during the opening of the morning letters, — many of them valuable, as coming from important correspondents abroad. Michael Armstrong's duty was to receive the key of the strong-room from the partners, when they came to business in the morning, and to prepare the books for the clerks in the outer offices. This strong-room was just at the back of Mr. James Fordyce's chair, and as he opened the most important correspondence, reading it to his brother, who rested on the corner of the table, there must have been a sharp eye and a sharper ear watching through the crevices of the iron door behind them. The next duty that fell to Michael Armstrong, after the letters were read and sorted, was, to take any drafts that might be in them to the bankers, and bring back the cash-box, which was always deposited there for safety overnight. This journey gave him an opportunity of acting upon the information that he had gathered, and he lost no time in doing so. Of course, we never knew exactly what he did, or how he did it; but we guessed that through some agent, with the money that Mr. James Fordyce had given him when he brought back the letter, he made purchases and sales in the stock-market, with more or less success. He never altered in his manner or appearance; never betrayed by word or signs to any of the clerks, his losses or his gains; and never neglected his mechanical duties, although he must have been much troubled in mind at times, by the operations he was conducting secretly out of doors.

Although not a favourite with the clerks, he became a favourite with the partners. There was no undue partiality exhibited towards him, for they were too scrupulously just for that, — but his remarkable business aptitude, his care and industry, his manners, and probably his supposed infirmity, brought immediately before them, every hour in the day by his position as private secretary, had a natural influence, and met with adequate reward.

In this way five years passed, quietly enough, to all outward appearance; but Michael Armstrong was working actively and desperately beneath the surface, and biding his time.

In those upper rooms to the right, exactly facing our counting-houses, lived an old clerk, named Barnard, with one child, a daughter, named Esther. The place was a refuge provided for an old and faithful, poor, and nearly worn-out servant of the house; and the salary he received was more like a pension, for his presence was never required in the office, except when he chose to render it. The daughter superintended the home of the two brothers, who, as I have said before, lived upon the premises in those rooms over the arches.

Esther Barnard, at this time, was not more than twenty years of age; rather short in figure; very pretty and interesting, with large, dark, thoughtful eyes. Her manners were quiet and timid, the natural result of a life spent chiefly within these red-bricked walls, in attendance upon an infirm father, and two old merchants. She went out very seldom, except on Sundays and Wednesday evenings, and then only to that old city church just beyond the gateway, whose bells are ringing even now. In the summer-time, after business-hours, she used to bring her work and sit upon this bench,

under this tree; and in winter her favourite place, while her father was dozing over the fire in a deep leathern chair, was in the dark recesses of that long window, in the corner of their sitting-room, overlooking the garden. She was very modest and retiring, never appearing more than was absolutely necessary during the day; but for all her care, many a busy pen was stopped in the office as her small, light form flitted rapidly under the arched passage; and many an old heart sighed in remembrance of its bygone youthful days, while many a young heart throbbed with something more of hope and love.

The one who saw her most was Michael Armstrong. His duty, every night, was to lock up the warerooms and counting-houses, rendering the keys to old Barnard, who placed them in the private apartments of the two brothers. Since the old clerk's bodily weakness had increased, this task was confided to his daughter, who executed it timidly at first, gaining courage, however, by degrees, until, at last, she came to consider it a part of the day's labour, even pleasant to look forward to. Whether Michael Armstrong ever really loved Esther Barnard is more than I can say. I have to judge him heavily enough in other and greater matters, and I am, therefore, loth to suspect him in this. He had no faith, no hope, no heart — nothing but brain, brain, ceaseless brain; and small love, that I have found, ever came from a soul like this. What he thought and meant was always hidden behind the same calm, smiling mask — the same thoughtful, deceptive, even beautiful face. He used his appearance as only another instrument to aid him in his designs, and he seldom used it in vain. Esther's love for Michael Armstrong was soon no secret to the whole house, and many, while they envied him,

sincerely pitied her, though they could scarcely give a reason for so doing. The partners, however — especially Mr. James Fordyce — looked with favour upon the match; but, from some cause, her father, old Barnard, felt towards it a strange repugnance. It may have been that there was some selfish feeling at the bottom of his opposition — some natural and pardonable disinclination to agree to an union, that threatened to deprive him in his sickness and his old age of an only daughter who was both his companion and his nurse. Be this as it may, he would not fix any definite time for the marriage, although, for his daughter's sake, he did not prohibit the visits of him upon whom her heart was bestowed. Michael Armstrong did not press just then for a more favourable determination, and, for this reason, I am led to believe that he had obtained his object — an excuse for being upon the premises unsuspected after the business hours of the day were over. I never knew him to allow his will to be opposed, and I must, therefore, conclude, that in this instance he was satisfied with the ground that had been gained. Esther, too, was happy — happy in her confidence and pure affection — happy in the presence of him she loved — happy in being powerless to penetrate behind the stony, cruel, selfish mask, that, in her trusting eyes, seemed always lighted up with love and truth.

In this way, the daily life went on for several months. Michael Armstrong, by care — unceasing care — perseverance, and talent, rose, day by day, in the respect and estimation of the partners. Much was entrusted to him; and although he was not visibly promoted over the heads of his seniors, he was still the confidential clerk; and the one in whom was centred the management of

the banking and financial transactions of the house. We presumed — for we knew nothing then — that he was still working stealthily on the information that he gathered in the partners' room; and which his new position, more than ever, gave him opportunities of using. It was a busy time for speculation about this period. Fortunes were made and lost by stock-gambling, in a day; and Michael Armstrong with his active, calculating brain, was not the man to allow the tempting stream to rush by without plunging into it.

Our firm had an important branch house at Liverpool, through which it conducted its shipping-trade with America. Every six months it was the custom of one of the partners — either Mr. James or Mr. Robert — to go down and pay a visit of inspection to this house, a task that usually occupied ten or twelve days. Mr. James Fordyce, about this time, took his departure one morning for Liverpool, leaving his brother Robert in charge of the London affairs. I can see them even now, shaking hands, outside that old gateway, before Mr. James stepped into the family coach in which the brothers always posted the journey. Michael Armstrong was gliding to and fro with certain required papers — unobtrusive, but keen and watchful. As the coach rolled away up the narrow street, Mr. James looked out of the window just as his brother had turned slowly back under the archway. It was the last he ever saw of him, alive.

For several days after Mr. James Fordyce's departure everything went on as before. He started on a Friday, with a view of breaking the long, tedious journey, by spending the Sunday with some friends in Staffordshire.

On the following Wednesday, towards the close of the day, a pigeon-express arrived from Liverpool, bearing a communication in his handwriting, which was taken in to Mr. Robert Fordyce in the private room. No one in the office — except, doubtless, Michael Armstrong — knew for many days what that short letter contained; but we knew too well what another short letter conveyed, which was placed in melancholy haste and silence the next morning under the pigeon's wing, and started back to Liverpool. This was in Michael Armstrong's handwriting.

Mr. James Fordyce, upon his arrival at Liverpool, had found their manager committed to large purchases in American produce without the knowledge of his principals, in the face of a market that had rapidly and extensively fallen. This gentleman's anxiety to benefit his employers was greater than his prudence; and, while finding that he had made a fearful error, he had not the courage to communicate it to London, although every hour rendered the position more ruinous. Mr. James Fordyce, after a short and anxious investigation, sent a despatch to his brother, for a sum of many thousands of pounds, — an amount as great as the house could command upon so sudden an emergency. This money was to be forwarded by special messenger, without an hour's delay, in a Bank of England draft: nothing less would serve to extricate the local branch from its pressing difficulty, and save the firm from heavier loss. The letter arrived on the Wednesday, after the banks had closed, and when nothing could be done until the following morning. In the meantime, in all probability, Michael Armstrong received instructions to prepare a statement of the available resources of the firm.

That evening, about half-past eight o'clock, when Esther Barnard returned from church, she found Michael Armstrong waiting for her at the gateway. He seemed more thoughtful and absent than usual; and his face, seen by the flickering light of the street oil-lamp (it was an October night), had the old, pale, anxious expression that I have before alluded to. Esther thought he was ill; but, in reply to her gentle inquiries, as they entered the house together, he said he was merely tired with the extra labour he had undergone, consequent upon the receipt of the intelligence from Mr. James Fordyce, and his natural solicitude for the welfare of the firm.

Mr. Robert Fordyce's habits — as, indeed, the habits of both the brothers — were very simple. He walked for two hours during the evening, from six o'clock to eight, and then read until nine, at which time he took a light supper, consisting of a small roll and a glass of milk; which was always brought to him by Esther, who left the little tray upon the table by the side of his book, and wished him good night until the morning. She then returned to Michael Armstrong, on the nights he visited her, to sit until the clock of the neighbouring church struck ten, at which hour she let him out at the gate, and retired to rest.

On the night in question, she had placed the same simple supper ready upon her table; and, after retiring for a few moments to her room, to leave her hat and cloak, she returned, and took the tray to Mr. Robert's apartments. She did not notice Michael Armstrong particularly before she went; but, when she came back, she found him standing by the open doorway, looking wildly and restlessly into the passage. She again asked him anxiously if he was ill, and his answer was as before;

adding, that he thought he had heard her father's voice, calling her name, but he had been mistaken.

They sat for some little time together over the fire. Michael Armstrong would not take any supper, although pressed by Esther to do so. His mind was occupied with some hidden thought, and he appeared as if engaged in listening for some expected sound. In this way passed about half an hour, when Esther thought she heard some distant groans, accompanied by a noise, like that produced by a heavy body falling on the ground. Esther started up; and Michael Armstrong, who had heard the noise too, immediately suggested the probable illness of her father. Esther waited not for another word, but ran to his apartment, to find him sleeping calmly in his bed. On her return, a few minutes afterwards, to the room she had just left, she found Michael Armstrong entering the doorway with the light. He said he had been along the passages to make a search, but without finding anything. He appeared more composed, and advised her to dismiss the matter from her mind. They sat together more cheerfully for the next half hour, until the ten o'clock bells sounded from the neighbouring church, when she went with him across the garden to the gate. The customary kiss was given at the door, and the customary laugh and good night received from the old private watchman parading the street; but Esther Barnard, as she locked the wicket, and walked across the garden again to her own room, felt a heavy-hearted foreboding of some great sorrow that was about to fall upon her. Her prayers that night were longer than usual, and her eyes were red with weeping before she went to sleep.

Meantime, the lamp in Mr. Robert Fordyce's apartment (the second window from the sun-dial) burnt dimly

through the night, and died out about the break of day. Its master had died some hours before.

In the morning the porters opened the place at the usual hour, and the full tide of business again set in. One of the earliest, but not the earliest, to arrive was Michael Armstrong. His first inquiry was for Mr. Robert Fordyce, who was generally in his private room to open the letters, and give out the keys. He had not been seen. An hour passed, and then the inquiry was extended to the dwelling-house. Michael Armstrong saw Esther, and begged her to go and knock at Mr. Robert's door. She went, slowly and fearfully, knocked, and there was no answer. Knocked again with the same result. The alarm now spread, that something serious had happened. Esther retired tremblingly with her forebodings of the night more than half realised, while the clerks came up, and, after a brief consultation, broke open the door.

A room with a close and slightly chemical smell; the blinds still down; an oil-lamp that had burnt out; a book half open upon the table; a nearly empty tumbler that contained milk; a roll untouched; and Mr. Robert Fordyce, lying dead, doubled up on the floor near a couch, the damask covering of which he had torn and bitten. On the table, near the tumbler was a small, screwed-up paper, containing some of the poison from which he had died; and near to this was a letter directed, somewhat tremblingly, in his own handwriting to his brother, Mr. James.

One of the earliest, but not the earliest in the room, was Michael Armstrong, calm, dignified, and collected. Though far younger than many others, he took the lead naturally and firmly, and no one seemed to have nerve

or inclination to dispute his authority. Esther stood anxiously amongst the crowd at the door looking on with her whole soul starting through her eyes.

Michael Armstrong took up the letter upon the table. It was unsealed. He opened it, and read in a clear, firm voice, the short and painful statement it contained. Mr. Robert Fordyce confessed to his brother that for some time he had largely appropriated the funds of the firm to his own use for speculations that had turned out unsuccessful in the stock-market. Unable to refund the money to meet the sudden emergency that had fallen upon the house, and fearing to see his brother again after perpetrating such a wrong, he had resolved to die by poison, administered by his own hand.

Deep silence, broken by sobs and tears, followed the reading of this letter, for the dead merchant was loved and respected by all. A short summons, written by Michael Armstrong, as I have said before, was tied to the pigeon, and sent to Mr. James Fordyce at Liverpool.

For the next few days the business of the house was almost at a standstill. The sad event was the gossip of the Exchange, and the commercial coffee-rooms; and the credit of Fordyce, Brothers, high as their character stood in the city, was, of course, materially and fatally injured by this sudden calamity.

It was late on the Friday night when Mr. James Fordyce returned, having started at once upon the receipt of the despatch, and posted the whole way. He spent an hour in silent and sacred communion with his dead brother, and every one read in his fine, open, benevolent face how thoroughly the wrong was forgiven that had shaken the foundations of the firm, and sent one of its members to a sudden grave.

He then devoted himself, night and day, to an investigation of their financial position, aided in everything by Michael Armstrong, who was ever at his side. In the course of a few days his determination was known. By closing the branch concern at Liverpool, contracting the operations, and reducing the London house, the capital remaining was sufficient to discharge all outstanding obligations, leaving a small balance upon which to reconstruct the firm. This was done, and the honour of Fordyce, Brothers, was preserved.

Many of our staff, under the new arrangements, were dismissed, but the thoughtful care of Mr. Fordyce had provided them with other situations in neighbouring firms. In other respects our business went on as before, but with one remarkable exception. The confidence hitherto existing between Mr. Fordyce and Michael Armstrong was at an end, and although the latter was still retained in his capacity as private secretary, he appeared to feel that he was no longer honoured and trusted. I believe at this time he would gladly have left the place, but some secret power and influence seemed to compel him to remain.

He had never made friends of any of his fellow-clerks, nor did he seek them now. Old Barnard's repugnance to his marriage with Esther at length took the form of open personal repugnance; and poor Esther, herself, while her heart was undoubtedly unchanged, became sometimes cold and timid in his presence: at others loving and repentant, as if struggling with some great, fearful doubt that she did not dare to confide to him. She was less desirous of seeking his company; and the roses on her fair young cheeks, that had grown up even within these old city walls, now faded away before the

hidden grief of her heart. God bless her; her love had fallen, indeed, upon stony ground.

Mr. Fordyce seemed also to be struggling between a variety of contending feelings. Whether he had set a watch upon Michael Armstrong at this period I cannot say; but while he appeared to feel his presence irksome, he seemed always anxious to have him near. Better would it have been for him if he had let him go his ways.

It was impossible for Michael Armstrong to be ignorant of this state of things, and it only served to make him, if possible, more keen-eyed and watchful. What he thought or did was still only known to himself, but there was occasional evidence upon the surface that seemed to indicate the direction of his silent working.

Our house had never entirely recovered the shock given to its credit by the violent death of Mr. Robert Fordyce. Rumours of our being in an insolvent position were occasionally bandied about the town, gaining strength with the maturing of a large demand; dying away for a time, after it had been promptly satisfied. Our bankers, too, began to look coldly upon us.

The rumours gradually took a more consistent and connected form; an unfavourable condition of the money-market arose; the strongest houses cannot always stand against such adverse influences, and we were, at last, compelled to close our transactions. We stopped payment.

Contrary to general expectation, Mr. Fordyce declined to call in any professional assistance to prepare a statement of the affairs of the firm. At a preliminary meeting of his creditors, he took his ground upon his long

and dearly-earned character for commercial integrity; and asked for a fortnight, in which to investigate his books and assets. He obtained it.

If any one was disappointed at this, it was Michael Armstrong. His will for once was foiled. For reasons best known, at that time, to himself; he wished, now that the house was destroyed, to have all the books and papers removed out of the reach of Mr. Fordyce. It was not to be.

Mr. Fordyce, from the hour of the meeting, almost lived in his private office-room. Day after day was he seen arranging papers, and making extracts from the leathern-bound ledgers. Night after night his green-shaded office-lamp was lighting him through the same heavy, weary task. He had removed his writing-desk from the back of the room to that window on the left of the ground-floor, where Michael Armstrong used to sit. He worked chiefly alone, and seldom called in the help of his secretary, except for some intricate parts of the cash accounts.

In this way the time went quickly on, and Mr. Fordyce had arrived within a few days of the completion of his labours.

It was on a Wednesday evening — a winter's evening in the latter part of January — about half-past seven o'clock, that Mr. Fordyce and Michael Armstrong were alone together, after all the clerks had gone, at the window in that room, deeply engaged in a mass of papers. There seemed to be an angry discussion between them. Mr. Fordyce was pointing firmly to some white paper leaves, which shone brightly under the condensed glare of the shaded lamp. Both faces were covered with a dark veil of shadow, arising from the reflected cover-

ing of the lamp, but Michael Armstrong's keen eyes flashed evilly, even through the mist of that dim light. The next moment he was behind Mr. Fordyce's chair, with his hand firmly twisted in the folds of the old merchant's neckcloth. There was a short and hopeless struggle. Two arms were thrown wildly into the air; a body fell off the chair on to the ground; and Mr. James Fordyce had learnt more in that instant, than all those piles of paper would have taught him, if he had examined them for years. He was dead; — dead, too, without any outward marks of violence upon his body.

Nor was this all.

Esther Barnard was sitting without a light in the dark recess of her favourite window; — sitting spell-bound, paralysed, parched and speechless, gazing upon the old office window and the green-covered lamp, under the shade of which this terrible drama had just passed before her eyes. She could make no sign. The whole fearful past history of Michael Armstrong was made clear to her as in a mirror, although the picture was shattered in a moment, as soon as formed. She must have sat there the whole night through, heedless of the calls of her sick father in the adjoining room, to nurse whom she had stayed away that evening from church. They found her in the morning in the same position, with her reason partially gone.

Michael Armstrong came in the next day, punctually at the business hour. He appeared even more collected than usual, for he believed that all evidence against him was now destroyed for ever. A rigid investigation was instituted on the part of the creditors; and the mind wanderings of poor Esther Barnard were of great importance in making out a case against him. It may be

that her sad affliction was ordained to bring about his destruction, for I do not believe that if she had retained her reason, she would ever have been induced to speak one word against him. Her heart might have broken, but her tongue would have remained silent. As it was, her accusations were gathered together, bit by bit, — gathered, as I gathered much of this story, from her lips in happy intervals, filling up from imagination and personal knowledge all that seemed unconnected and obscure.

The investigation never reached the courts of law. Michael Armstrong saw with the old clearness of vision the inevitable result of the chain of evidence, — saw it traced up from speculation to forgery, from forgery to his poisoning of Mr. Robert Fordyce, from the poisoning to his forgery of the letter transferring the early crime, and from the letter to the destruction of the house and its last surviving representative. To avoid the expected punishment, — prepared as he always was for every emergency, — he poisoned himself in that private room, before our eyes. Whether the capital, of which he had sapped the firm, had been productive or not in his hands, we never knew. He was never known to acknowledge any kindred; and no one ever acknowledged him. He died, and made no sign; silently and sullenly, with his face to the wall.

At one time I indulged in the hope that Esther Barnard might recover, and I had prepared a home for her, even without the selfish desire of being rewarded with her poor, broken heart. Her father died, and I cherished her as a brother. Her melancholy madness, at times, was relieved with short lucid intervals, during which she thanked me so touchingly and sweetly for

supposed kindnesses, that it was more than a reward. It was my pleasure to watch for such happy moments, patiently for days, and weeks, and months. In one of them she died, at last, in these arms, and I buried her in the ground of her old church outside the gateway. Our firm was never, in any form, restored, though I still cling to the old place. I have seen it sink gradually, step by step, until it can scarcely sink lower; but it is still near Esther. There is little happiness in growing so very old.

The old clerk told his story truthfully and clearly, and if there was any indistinctness of utterance about it, it was only towards the close. Much of it may have been the phantom of an old man's imagination, feeding on the tradition of a few closed, dusty shutters; but it interested me, because it spoke to me of a bygone time, and of persons and things among which I love to live and move.

END OF VOL. VIII.

PRINTED BY BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

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end of the world, and many people are
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will continue to exist for many years
to come. We should not worry about
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most of the time we have.

The world is a beautiful place, and
there is much to be seen and heard.

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Dickens, Charles,

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